TILLAGE OF THE HEART

ALVAH SABIN HOBART

252.06
H681

A KIND friend has made possible the purchase of this book, and it is sent to you in the hope that you will gladly read it and then pass it to some other missionary, pastor or evangelist, who in turn, after reading it, will forward it upon its mission. Will you kindly write your name and address in the book after you have read it. If the book is helpful to you, please write to the Literature Department of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, at 23 East 26th St., New York City.

Central BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
presented by
DR. ROBERT G. TORBET

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

TILLAGE OF THE HEART

OR THE

CULTIVATION OF GOODNESS

TILLAGE OF THE HEART

OR THE

CULTIVATION OF GOODNESS

By

ALVAH SABIN HOBART

Professor
New Testament Interpretation
Crozer Theological Seminary

Author "Our Silent Partner"

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

PHILADELPHIA

BOSTON ST. LOUIS

CHICAGO

LIBRARY
CENTRAL BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS 66102

Copyright 1909 by
A. J. ROWLAND, Secretary

Published December, 1909

252.06
H681

PREFACE

THE chapters of this book, as the reader will see, are not essays, but sermons. They were uttered in the Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, D. C., as vacation sermons, in the summer of 1909. They retain their original colloquial form, as nearly as it could be reproduced.

I have been much impressed for several years that the Christian life of our country needs a more persistent and hopeful cultivation than it gets. We are in an age of criticism. The man who denounces gets a hearing. We need more encouragement to high living. The Saviour was a man of wondrous hope for mankind. Having been led to see his hopefulness I have been greatly desirous to utter his word of hope to a wider audience than any single congregation. Hence this book. It goes forth

54109

with the prayer that it may be read, not as a literary production, asking anybody's praise, but as a loving word of hope to sinners, who like the author, are seeking to be better than they are, and expecting to succeed. "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

A. S. H.

Crozer Theological Seminary
October, 1909

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	Essential Requirements	9
II.	Examination of the Field...	30
III.	Nature's Assistance	51
IV.	Specific Helps for Uprooting Specific Faults	74
V.	The Aim of Our Tillage, and How We Learn It.....	93
VI.	What the Ideal Is.....	113
VII.	The Power to Win.....	133
VIII.	The Results of Our Tillage.	157

I

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—2 Cor. 7 : 1.

"Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit."—John 15 : 8.

IN driving through New England it is not unusual to see little farms adjoining one another which seem to belong to different climates, and countries. One of them is ready to be abandoned by its hopeless tenants. Its fields are bare, its fences poor. The few stray cattle that dot its pastures like the "here and there a traveler" of the "narrow way" are lean as Pharaoh's kine in Joseph's dream. The buildings lack shingles and paint. The children are ill-kempt, and ill-mannered. No man wonders that the sons grow up and "go away to the city."

The other is "a little paradise." Rich

harvests await the reapers. Good fences and well-cut hedges divide field from field. Fine dairy cattle feed numerous on the verdant hillsides. Good carriages stand under the wagon-shed; well-dressed and intelligent children run and sing in the meadows. Thrift and intelligence are in all quarters. The country is redeemed in your estimate, and you say, "How delightful to live here!"

These two farms are of the same soil. They lie open to the same sun, and draw their moisture from impartial heavens. But one of them is tilled; the other is only tenanted. The first is neglected in the belief that the land is exhausted and cannot be made to produce. The other is tilled under the "scientific farming" which is coming into honor in our days.

These two farms are symbolic of two ways of living the Christian life. One way is pessimistic, and unthrifty. The other is hopeful and diligent. The unthrifty man forgets that God told Adam that he was to *till* the ground. The other thinks all the time on the promise that seed-time and harvest shall not fail.

This failure to cultivate is found elsewhere as well. We have heard singers

whose voice and expression and personality were such that to hear them sing was an inspiration to good deeds. A certain indescribable quality about their singing made it reach the heart of the hearers, and predisposed them to accept the gospel message. We have heard others who sang as loud, and as correctly, perhaps, but they moved no hearts.

There have been editors who, without any seeming effort, gave to the public far-seeing reviews of the political situation in pure but idiomatic American language. They kept the readers in touch with the undercurrent of affairs, and educated the nation in matters of State. But one day the "junior" tried his hand at writing. The people read the editorials and, with perplexed look, they said: "The editor must have gone on his vacation this week." Something was lacking, but the people felt rather than understood the lack. There are ministers whose thought is so clear, and whose expression is so fitting, that the words they speak sink down into men's minds like sugar into a cup of tea, sweetening as it goes—dissolving at last and losing its own identity, but making men better in

all their lives. We remember such sermons. They flavored truth to our minds. They became to us inexhaustible inspirations to spiritual activities. Some of them have been the determining influences in our course of life. Then we have heard other ministers. They said to themselves, "Oh, it is very easy to be a good preacher. Men are hungry for the 'simple gospel.' What we need to do is to tell men about Jesus, warm the emotions with a few stories of conversion, and the thing is done." But alas! it does not stay done. The community is not made more Christlike by it. It is the old story over again. The poet Horace, in his "Ars Poetica," wrote to young Piso something like this: "Good poetry is that kind which, when one reads it, seems to be very easy to write. But when he attempts to write it, he sweats much and does not succeed." The truth is that good things in any department of life are the combination of purpose and skill; the product of intelligent and persevering effort. One can get a heavy glass dish with intricate pattern pressed upon it for fifty cents. He can get the same glass and the same pattern cut by hand for fifteen dol-

lars. One can get a painting of good color, representing fine faces and beautiful landscape quite cheaply. But that which has by slow and delicate touch expressed the artist's conception of Mary, or of Jesus, costs a fortune. One pays not only for the time of the painter, but for the sighs and prayers and struggles—the very life experiences which qualified him for his work.

The sermons which thrill and uplift you are born in prayer. They embody the minister's study of human life to find its needs; his study of the Bible to find the supply of those needs; the long cultivation of language to gain the power of expression which reaches the heart; and the cross-bearing spirit which gives the sympathy that suffuses them all.

The poetry of Horace was the product of a poetic soul in partnership with a poet's training. Neither poetry nor piety is automatic. A combination of heart and work, of purpose and training, is a necessity for a high grade of goodness. We have the first part; there is abundant supply of preference for goodness in the abstract. The dishonest would prefer to be honest if it did not cost too much. Every man would pre-

fer to have all his money "untainted." We may want reputation so much that we will accept a hollow one; but we all would rather have a solid one. Plenty of people would be Christians of the best sort if it did not deprive them of something which they think is a necessity for their enjoyment. If the road to goodness was as wide and smooth as the road to something less than goodness, the Saviour's words about the two ways could be reversed.

The hymn now reads:

> Broad is the road that leads to death,
> And thousands walk together there;
> But Wisdom shows a narrow path,
> With here and there a traveler.

Then it might read:

> Hard is the road that leads to death,
> With here and there a traveler;
> But Goodness hath a broader path,
> And thousands walk together there.

And why should we not desire a high grade of goodness? No man desires to buy or to raise apples which are called "culls," nor wheat that is number three. Why should we be satisfied to be ourselves

"culls," or number three, or "imperfect" men and women? To have true goodness is to meet the expectations of our best friends. It is to have the comfort of self-approval. It must also have the approval of Him whose we are. The desire for goodness is abundant. But by some kind of influence, which it may not be worth while to trace now, many men and women have come to a half-settled conviction that goodness is something we obtain rather than produce. Some quaint fellow said that the way to be an orator is to be filled with the subject, and then "let nature caper." Something like this is the instruction which says "to be truly good is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and then be led by it." In both these sayings there is a truth, but in both of them there is a great shortage of truth. The orator must indeed know his subject, and be filled with it. But he must have much more than that. He must know language well enough to tell what he knows. He must know the audience well enough to supply what they lack. He must have a voice which has such vital connection with his feelings that when his heart exults his voice will be thrilled with his exultation,

and when his heart weeps his voice will tremble. In addition to these he must have that indefinable something which men call "personality"; *then* he may "let nature caper." And so the Christian man or woman needs to know and to have several things. When these are in possession, then, and not till then, he may trust to the leading of the Spirit to make goodness abound. The Spirit must, indeed, lead us; but it must lead in his way, not in our way. And his way is to lead through the agency and partnership of all the powers and faculties which God has given to us. For this reason the increase in goodness which we desire calls for a study of its conditions, and what we may not improperly call its "laws." It is to these that I am permitted for a few Sunday mornings to ask your attention.

This morning I wish to consider three requisites for the "Tillage of the Heart" or the cultivation of goodness.

The first requisite is the right attitude toward goodness. The home of moral goodness is in the intentions.[1] If a little child were building block houses, and you

[1] Aristotle, "Ethics," Book III, Chap. IV, V.

should, in passing, knock one down, the first thing the child would do would be to look up and find out whether you did it intentionally or not. If you did, you would lose his respect. If the child saw that you did not mean to do it, he might have grief, but not anger. He estimates the quality of your act by your attitude of heart in the matter. This is a fundamental idea in our estimates of conduct. As the Proverb says, "Out of the heart are the issues of life." [2] John said "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." [3] Even though he does not kill, yet he is deterred from it by fear, not by respect for his brother. He needs only time and dangerless opportunity to coin his thoughts into deeds. When Naaman had been cured by Jehovah's prophet, he said to Elisha that he would not himself worship any God but Jehovah. But his duties to his king made it necessary for him to go with the king into the temple of Rimmon, and to bow down with him. He asked if he might do this? And the prophet said, "Go in peace." [4] The heart of the man was his moral measure. Paul said

[2] Prov. 4 : 23. [3] 1 John 3 : 15.
[4] 2 Kings 5 : 15-19.

of the times when he was hunting Christians like wild beasts that he obtained forgiveness "because he did it ignorantly in unbelief," and that he "verily thought he ought" to do it.[5] His attitude toward goodness was correct. And that attitude, while it did not excuse his acts, gave him the opportunity to obtain forgiveness. There can be no goodness without the hunger for it. Accidental goodness is not goodness. One must say in his heart of hearts, "O Lord, I want to be a good man. I would like to be rich, or learned, or great, but I want most of all to be a good man." Peter wrote: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." That word "diligence" is not much used among us now. One seldom sees it in the newspapers. But it was a great word in the days when the New Testament was translated. "Seest thou a man diligent in business? That man shall stand before kings." "Thou hast commanded us thy precepts that we should observe them diligently." "Give diligence that ye may be found in peace without spot and blameless."[6] If we hope to be good, we

[5] Acts 26 : 9; Gal. 1 : 13; 1 Tim. 1 : 13.
[6] Prov. 22 : 29; Ps. 119 : 4; 2 Peter 3 : 14.

must see to it that our hearts are set upon it. It must be not merely an incident in our career that we are good, but it must be the main current of our desires.

It is a great comfort to find the Scriptures dealing so hopefully with those who really mean well, though they do ill. Jephthah made a foolish vow when he said he would sacrifice the first thing that came out to meet him on his return. And then, to his horror, his beloved daughter, not knowing his vow, came out; and, for the vow's sake, was sacrificed. But how tenderly do the Scriptures deal with the case! Jephthah's vow is recorded with sorrow, as is the sorrow of all Israel, as they bewailed the virginity of the sweet girl. But Jephthah is not cursed. His intention saved him that penalty.[7]

So too, Abraham, because he meant to do right, and was preparing for the sacrifice of his son because he thought it was right, was spared the sorrow, but was honored for his faith.

So is it now. Many are esteemed because of their intention to do good who err in their way of doing it. In the long run, intention

[7] Judg. 11; Dawson's "Reproach of Christ," p. 152.

will not fail to be recognized. God, who knoweth the heart, will measure us there.

But let us not make the mistake of thinking that intention is the whole substance of goodness. A man, to be wholly good, must be good for something. This intention must be applied to life in its daily activities. One must know when he is doing the right thing. This brings us to consider the second requirement.

The second requisite is a correct ideal of life. In the study of ethics we come upon two lines of thinking. One way of looking at life says that men do as rivers do. They take the line of least resistance. If a lake on some high mountain should be drained off through a deep cut, the water would run here and there, following no prearranged course, and yet, in a way, necessitated to run, as it does run, by the obstacles it meets. If the land is level and the obstructions high, the river will be deep and the current sluggish. If the land is hilly, and the way open, the river will be swift and shallow. There is no purpose on the part of any one to guide it, but the combination of water behind with obstacles in front, determines the course of

the stream. So, some men say, our life is lived—not by any predetermined plan or purpose, but evolves according to circumstances without plan, and yet by a kind of necessity.

There is no moral goodness in such a life. Under that view, what we call "moral" would not exist. A machine can have no moral virtues.

Probably none of us is willing to accept that necessitarian idea of life, for it reduces us to mere corks on the water, having no true independence or personality; to "things"—very refined and highly organized "things"—tossed to and fro by every wind.

The other view of life is based upon the fact that we are creatures who choose. That, whether we understand it all or not, we do actually determine our course to a large extent, and we determine our goodness almost wholly. (It is, of course, understood that the partnership of God is not ignored.) We may be good or not, as we for ourselves decide. We are not now concerned much with the theory of goodness. We face a condition, not a theory. What seems sure to us is that we do deter-

mine our course. We are now what we are because we chose what we did last year. And we shall be next year what we shall be because we choose what we do choose this year. Now, that which determines our choices this year is what men call our *ideal.* That is, the kind of men, or the kind of women we really desire to be is the controlling power in our choices. "Morality may be said to be an attempt to realize certain types of men. Each one of us endeavors to be a particular kind of man. To be moral is to live, if not up to, yet toward that ideal." [8]

Suppose that we, having a most earnest desire to do the right, had, as the idea of right, only what the blindest heathen has. It is perfectly evident that the whole fabric of life would be different from what it is. The woman of the Ganges, in her desire to do right, throws her infant to the river; the woman of America gives her own life for her's. The Indian, desiring to please his God, scalps his enemy. The Christian, in the same desire, forgives his enemy. The old-fashioned Calvinist says, with Doctor Ryland, "When God wants to save the heathen, he will do it without your help or

[8] "The Religion of All Good Men," Garrod, p. 8.

mine." The present-day Christian says, "I doubt whether I can be saved myself if I do not try to save others." One kind of honest politician says, "I must be in line with my party—for party government is necessary, on the whole, for the best efficiency." The other says, "Party or no party, I must follow my own judgment as to what is best in any particular case." So we see that a desire to be good may lead to wrong unless one has an ideal that is good. And the ideal in a long run determines a man's course. As the ship, though it sails on a tack seemingly away from its destination, yet in the balance of its departures and its returns tends toward its haven, so a man in his actions moves, on the whole, toward the man he really wants to be. If a man means to be a good man, but has never been made to think or feel that goodness includes some care and help for the outcast and the down-trodden; some interest in the sociological movements that look toward the cleansing of the slums; some interest in the general laws of the country; some more interest in the republic of nations; if, I say, a man has not seen these things as a part of the man he wants to be, his total goodness is

far less than if he had seen them, and sought to attain them. He falls short because his ideal was small.

There is a difference in the influence and value of goodness, as well as in the quality. The quality of Mr. Spurgeon's goodness as a preacher was not better than the quality of his coachman's, perhaps. But there was a difference in the value to others. A large ideal makes a large man. The old-fashioned Doctor Maclure, of whom Doctor Watson wrote in "The Bonny Briar Bush," cannot be excelled in the *quality* of his goodness as a physician. But the surgeon who came to help him, and saved a life which, but for him, Maclure must have seen go out, was far greater in the *value* of goodness. The old-fashioned doctors, who used to bleed the people to cure tuberculosis, meant as well as any could. But their ideal of a doctor was far less valuable than the man who now finds a cure for the white plague in the proper sanitation and nourishment of the sick. There is a goodness which is like the well, deep and perennial for one family; and another which is like the lake whose waters are the hope of a country.

To be usefully good, one must have a

large ideal. No man can be thus who does not have a large and a refined and quite complete notion of what goodness is, and how to attain it. He must understand something about the powers that are latent in himself; and he must see the possibilities that are latent in others. He must have a sort of a vision of what the New Jerusalem is to be, and by what sort of tackling it is to be let down out of heaven to earth. If you tell your son that you want him to be like Mr. Lincoln, and all that he ever heard about Mr. Lincoln is his rail splitting, and story telling, and flatboat experiences, how little result would come to your son compared with what might come if he knew the story of Mr. Lincoln as the superb-hearted president, who understood men; who knew no malice; who had unlimited patience and unfailing faith in God; the man whom his opponents honored, and whose one-time enemies are now ashamed to own their enmity; whom all men love to honor.

It is possible to have Christ as our ideal, and yet have too small an idea of *him*. Paul said,[9] "I have known Christ after the flesh, but now I know him so no more." He

[9] 2 Cor. 5 : 16.

wrote to the Corinthians, "We, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image."[10] But if, when we look into that mirror, we see no glory, we get no glorious change. To get the *uplift,* we must have the *uplook.* So, we say again, to have great goodness, we must have a good attitude, plus a good ideal.

There must be power to accomplish. There may be a good attitude, and a splendid ideal, while the actual attainment of goodness is small. There are in every community those who illustrate this fact. We may say of ourselves, "We have hearts quite well in sympathy with goodness. We have high ideas of what manner of men we ought to be. We have more ideals than we know what to do with. The truth is, we are made uncomfortable by the fact that our ideals are so much higher than our attainments." Like Paul, we say, "The good that I would do I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do."[11] With all our riches of ideal we may be paupers in righteousness. Our case may be the case of a splendid engine, on a good track, with a fair grade, but with coal so poor that it

[10] 2 Cor. 3 : 18. [11] Rom. 7.

won't make steam. We approve the good, but we fail to do it. We approve things excellent, and often do things execrable. At times we rise up and begin to do better, and in a little while we are out of breath and give it up. Much of the time we cry in our souls:

> Oh, for more of His power within me.
> Oh, for greater love!

What I am saying is to emphasize this need of power to accomplish what we truly desire. It is the common experience of mankind that we are in need of some mighty impulse which will be able to awaken our moral forces into full action, and to sustain them with great patience. We have had occasional samples of such impulse—enough to make us know its power. We want the source of it. We need to search for that as for hid treasure. We must find what will awaken enthusiasm, enkindle hope, supply courage. We may "squeeze through," as Job said, "by the skin of our teeth" [12] without this. But it will be a "hand to mouth" existence, with no riches of goodness, and no "abundant entrance."

[12] Job 19 : 20.

Better things are worth trying for. We subordinate great things to win corruptible crowns. It will be worth while to make a strenuous endeavor to, in a certain real sense, systematize our efforts to be truly good for the sake of an incorruptible character.

Those who were able to attend the Marathon races in London, in the year 1908, will recall the wondrous scene when the race was finished. The runners were panting from the strenuous work. The friends were gathered around them congratulating them on their victory. National pride thrilled the heart of every Englishman and every American, for the merits of the two were so evenly matched that it was not easy to determine the winner. At length, on a high platform, which stood in the focus of vision for fifty thousand people, surrounded with royalty, came King Edward VII and his Queen. Then the herald, with a speaking-trumpet to his mouth, called aloud the name of the victor, and bade him come up to the platform. And he, amid the deafening applause of the multitude, went up and received from the Queen the prize for his victory.

It had cost long months of training, the most careful self-control of appetite and pleasure, long hours of determined, strenuous running. But it was worth while.

Paul seems to have had some such scene in mind when he wrote, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the 'upcalling' of God in Christ Jesus," and "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day." It is worth while to try. And we have this to encourage us. In that race, as in the Greek races, many ran, but only one obtained the prize; but we may all, if we run with patience, obtain Christian character and the "upcalling of God" in Christ Jesus. And the three great fundamental necessities for it are an attitude of desire, a large ideal, and communication with the source of moral power.

II

EXAMINATION OF THE FIELD

"But let a man examine himself."—1 Cor. 11 : 28.

IF a man were to begin the reclamation of a farm, or its substantial improvement, his first step would be to make a mental survey of its condition. He would note the various kinds of soil, the noxious weeds it produces, the marshes to be drained, the stones to be removed. And then he would plan his work to meet the exigencies. In the tillage of the heart, it will be necessary at the first to give a thoughtful attention to the faults of life.

I should regret exceedingly if what I am about to say should be understood as favoring a morbid self-inspection. It is not such an examination that I counsel. But it is a well-recognized fact that we often see what we think are faults in ourselves, and overlook the greatest ones. It is easy to be deceived about ourselves. We must, there-

fore, "gird up the loins of our minds" in this matter that we may not overlook our real weaknesses. We may not safely be content to ask what the creeds say about us. They tell us that "all men are by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God; positively inclined to evil, and therefore under just condemnation without defense or excuse.[1] It is an easy thing to give assent to that statement. But mere assent counts for nothing. It may be a sort of opium plaster to ease the pain of conscience, while the sore on our souls rots away our moral life. This kind of assent is a most dangerous substitute for the real sense of our badness which must precede any radical improvement.

Neither may we be content simply to accept the statements of the Scriptures on this matter. We know they say that, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags";[2] and "There is none righteous, no not one";[3] and "We are all children of wrath, even as others."[4] We are liable to think that because we believe the Bible, and assent to these condemnatory things which it says

[1] "N. H. Conf.," Article III. [2] Isa. 64 : 6.
[3] Rom. 3 : 10. [4] Eph. 2 : 3.

about us, we are in a fit frame of mind to accept the grace of God. But I take it that mere assent to such sayings, simply because they are in the Bible, is not worth a rush toward helping us to overcome our faults. It is a very different thing from feeling our sin, and crying out as the psalmist did, "My sin is ever before me." No! not this formal assent to anybody's opinion about us, but some intelligent view of our own case in the light of careful examination is needed. We know how in sickness the old-fashioned doctor used to feel the pulse, look at the tongue, and give a dose of calomel. But now the skilled physician seeks first a thorough diagnosis of the case. He studies the action of the heart and lungs; takes the temperature; inquires about the digestion; obtains cultures from the secretion of the throat to see if diphtheria is present; examines the sputum for tubercular, the blood for malarial, germs. Then he feels prepared to prescribe.

The same is true in business. Men who would improve their business find out where the leaks are. They inquire, "Does the clerical force cost too much?" "Are any of them dishonest?" "Is there any energy

displayed among them?" "Can the incidental expenses be reduced?" "Is there enough in the business to make it pay under any management?"

And in political matters the same is true. We all are familiar with Daniel Webster's grandiloquent opening words in reply to Mr. Hayne's speech on slavery: "When the mariner has been tossed for many days in thick weather on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm to take his latitude, and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course." [5]

We remember also Mr. Lincoln's less wordy, but equally wise statement, "If we knew where we are and whither we are tending, we should know better what to do and how to do it."

So is it in this matter of our own life; we must thoroughly know our condition. It is said of our great missionary, Doctor Judson, that at one time he found himself fearing that his contact with sin in India had blunted the sense of his sinfulness. He prayed to God that he might have a clearer view of his own condition. And his prayer

[5] "Great Speeches," p. 226.

was answered. Somehow the windows of his soul were thrown open to the light, and he saw the accumulated dust of years, the mildew on the walls, the spider sins up near the ceiling, the bugs that had their nests in the corners. He smelled the must of old theology, and snuffed the miasma of decaying sympathies until he cried out, "O God, it is enough! Create in me a clean heart; renew a right spirit within me." After that he could sing with great fervor:

> Oh, to grace how great a debtor
> Daily I'm constrained to be.

And Paul went through a similar experience. He says, "I was alive once without the law. But the law came, sin revived, and I died." [6] That is, the time was when, though he knew the law by head, he did not know it in heart. He assented to its sayings, but the fact of his own sinfulness was not impressed on him. He saw his own badnesses very dimly, and therefore did not make any strong effort to overcome them. He was orthodox. He was honored in his church. He was zealous—so much so that he could persecute those whom he

[6] Rom. 7 : 9.

thought were not orthodox. But one day he saw himself as God saw him. Then he cried out, "O wretched man that I am."

It is this sense of our own sinfulness which we must try to obtain. Not a sense of sins which we do not have; nor a sense of sins which others think we have, but a sense, true and just, of what concrete sins we do have, and what specific deficiencies in our Christian life remain to be remedied.

But while all this is, I doubt not, vaguely understood by us, I think we feel—I know I did for a long time—dependent wholly upon some superhuman agency which should reveal our condition to us. We have said, "The Holy Spirit must convict of sin." And we have not so generally recognized it as a part of our own proper duty to try to discover for ourselves the true state of our case. We have sometimes had a foolish notion that as pests on trees live out their days and depart of their own motion and will, so our faults will probably go away—"burn themselves out with their own flame"—without our special attention to them; disappear with our advancing years of experience. Dr. Henry G. Weston had a great rose garden. On being asked for some in-

formation about rose culture, he replied: "I know nothing about it. All I do is to keep the soil rich, and hope thus to grow the roses faster than the lice or pests can eat them up." That answers fairly well part of the time. But one year some sort of malady attacked them which withered the buds by the hundreds, and made them turn black in a night. Special treatment was needed then. And that could only come by knowledge of the disease. Many people tell us that the only requirement for growing into goodness is to keep in good company; keep active in Christian duty, and the rest will follow naturally. There is a great amount of truth in that. But it is far from all the necessary truth. What shall we say of an active, soul-stirring, world-known evangelist who does not pay his debts? Could not he discover that fault by a little self-examination? And would it not be at least better for his creditors if he should try and be rid of that fault before he is an old man? "He that hath arrived at the stature of Christ, hath already fulfilled the prime and longest intention of his being, and cannot be called young." [7] He could get the

[7] "Letter to a Friend," Sir Thos. Browne, p. 146.

virtue of age in his youth, and thus gain time. Or, how about a Christian business man who, in his desire to make a success, grinds the faces of his helpers in the business? Or a social leader in the church who is hard on her housemaids? Or the carpenter who is faithfully at church, and is not faithful in his carpenter work? Are not these faults discoverable by self-examination, and remediable by self-culture?

A preacher, whose name is well known, found himself deficient in the use of illustration. He was an abstract sort of a thinker; reasoned all the time as if he were talking to a class in mathematics; fed the reasoning powers, but starved the affections of his people. But when he found in what he was deficient he began to cultivate his imagination and illustrating power. Now he is a most remarkable man in his power of illustration. Doctor Watkinson tells of a man who was excessively timid at the thought of death. He forced himself to sleep in the presence of a skeleton, until he overcame it. Shall we, then, think that the consciousness of our own faults must wait until some other than ourselves makes them known to us? The old Greeks said, "Know thyself." The

modern man, while he has help which the Greek did not have, may not neglect the precept of the old philosophy.

When we come to the self-examination, there are three things into which we need to look.

The first is our motives. We said, in a former address, the first place to estimate the moral quality of an act is in the motive, or intention of it. No matter how good an act may be in itself, it fails to bring us comfort if the motive is not right. So far as the world about us is concerned, the motive may not affect the influence of an act. Bread given to the hungry will feed them as well if it is given from love of praise as if in a spirit of love. But the man most concerned in an act is the actor. And with him the motive is important. The real heart of an act is found in the answer to the question, "Why did I do it?" It sometimes occurs that men praise an act of ours as an act of generosity, when we know it was done out of pure diplomacy, to gain some other end than the one they see. How empty their praise seems to us! We know that the act of which *they* speak, and as they see it, was

in reality not performed at all. They were deceived. At other times we are accused of wrong actions, which were done with great self-sacrifice and the best motives. These accusations grieve us at their injustice, but how light are the self-inflictions of reproach at such mis-judgments! Put such acts in the crucible of the truth and they stand all tests. Perhaps the record of our goodness will shrink very much when brought to this test, for our motives are mixed with dross. But it is worth while—not too frequently—to put some of our record into the assay office of our best judgment and see what proportion of it melts away under the fire, and how much will bear the test. Some woman, writing of the New England people, said that they could not receive a kindly, self-sacrificing service from others without asking, "I wonder why they did it." This is slander on New England, but it reveals a certain tendency to mistrust motives; and such suspicion is born in one's own consciousness of mixed motive, for to accuse any one of a wrong shows such a wrong to be possible in the accuser. It is uncomfortable to go on under false colors. Quaint old Thomas Browne said, "He who

acts a part is, as it were, out of himself; which, if long, proves so irksome that men are glad to pull off their vizards and resume themselves again." [8]

Again, it is well to examine our habits. We are creatures of habit. And it is good to be such. Virtue is not full grown in any until it is habitual, and kept for the love of it. But there is a habit of action, and another of feeling. Prof. St. John, of Hartford School of Pedagogy, said in a lecture at Northfield, on the training of the young in missions, that "it is not best to try and form in very young children the habit of giving money, for they do not know the value of money, nor do they experience any self-denial in the giving. Better train them in the habit of *feeling interest in others* who have less knowledge of God than they, and then, when the knowledge of money and the power to earn it come, the habitual interest in others will be the spring of true benevolence and large gifts of money." It is well to examine life and see whether *our* contributions of money, *our* attendance at church, *our* courtesy to others, *our* response to causes of need, are

[8] "Christian Morals," p. 220.

mere habits of action without a real habit of sympathy. Do we give money because it is the least trouble to help in that way? Are we reading the Bible and saying our prayers from habit, or from the love of it? I do not say that habit of action is not good, for it is. But I say that the *best*—and we want the best—is habit of affection. That will bring the best results. John Ruskin wrote: "If people do right, in time they come to like doing it. But they are only in a right moral stage when they have come to like doing it; and as long as they don't like it, they are still in a vicious state. The entire object of true education is to make people not only do right, but enjoy doing right things; not merely industrious, but to love industry—not merely learned, but to love knowledge—not merely pure, but to love purity—not merely just, but to hunger and thirst after justice."

"I am prepared," says one writer, "to maintain that so long as we are conscious of performing a good action from a sense of duty only, we are immoral. . . So long as we only do our duty we are 'unprofitable servants.' I will even go farther. I will maintain that there have been more crimes

done in this world in the name of duty than good deeds." [9]

We may ask, "Am I drifting easily in a current of good habit and early training, or making a brave self-directed business of righteousness?" "Am I living a respectable life because my lot is cast where there is no great battle, or am I, having on the whole armor of God, standing against all the wiles of the wicked one, strong in the strength which God supplies?" I do not say we should covet the fight, but I say that a truthful estimate of our own situation, in the light of these questions, is necessary for a just estimate of our own worth, and our estimate of the worth of others.

And, again, we may profitably examine our knowledge of right. Many a man has good motives, and good habits, as far as he knows, but he is in error about what is right. For example: Is it the Christian's right to obey or to disobey a law of the land when he thinks the law is not just? A clerk in a store—is it his duty to refuse to sell goods for what he knows they are not? A stenographer is directed to write a

[9] H. W. Garrod, in "The Religion of All Good Men," p. 32.

letter, the contents of which she knows are false—is she justified in doing so, or should she refuse? A politician is expected by his party to stand by a certain measure for the party's sake. He does not himself like the measure. What is his proper course? It may be that men have come to erroneous decisions about such matters. It is for them to revise their knowledge of moral duties. There was a time when the best Christians did not think it a duty to send missionaries. They were wrong in their judgment. There was a time when the deacons and ministers did not think it wrong to use alcoholic drinks, even in church gatherings. They have learned better. Once good men in America thought slavery was right, and thought they found its justification in the Scriptures. Now the men are very scarce who would not condemn it as in whole and in every part unchristian.

It has lately been said (or written) that the teachers of ethics in our schools are trying to blast away the Rock of Ages. I think any man who reads the article must see that it is either a new ebullition of Tarbellianism, or an example of gross ignorance of the facts. The teaching of ethics in the

colleges is not disturbing the Rock of Ages, but surveying its proportions, and finding the eternal bases on which it rests. But as these bases are laid bare, it is being found that moral principles which have Christian confirmation are susceptible of much wider and more thorough application than we have been giving them. We are living in times when some of the common judgments of life are being reversed, but upon good moral authority. It becomes us all to look into our moral ideas and see if we are reasoning from some false premise, and, like Paul, "verily thinking we ought" to do certain things which we ought not to do. If we, as a people, are to rise to nobler things, we must rise to higher ideas of our duty. Are our common conceptions of duty as high as they can be? If they are not, then we ought to make them higher. Are there any duties contained in the spirit of the Master's teaching which we have not seen to be our duties? Then we ought to search for them as for hid treasure. It is certainly the business of Christian men to christianize the civil life of the land. And that requires more than submission to somebody's dictum. It means examination of one's own duty.

These three fields of inquiry—our motives, our habits, and our knowledge of moral requirements, will cover pretty well the ground of a good self-inspection.

Now, a word about the search itself. How shall it be made, and with what helps?

First it must be an honest search. I mean we must be honest with ourselves, for no others are to know what we find. If we find real faults, we may not gloss them over, but admit to ourselves the facts. If a man finds that he is accustomed to misstate facts, let him not say to himself, "Well, I did stretch that a little," or "That was partly a play of the imagination," but let him say, "That was a false statement, and I knew it was false when I made it; and a false statement is a lie; and the man who makes such habitually is a liar; and when I look in the glass I look at a liar." Brand the brow of your own consciousness as with a hot iron "*Liar.*" Brought up in a Christian land, with an open Bible, with a knowledge of Christ's true life, and still a *liar!*

If a man finds that he is accustomed to crowd others that he may get the best for himself; that he always takes, but seldom gives; hunts the best seat in church, or

streetcars or steamcars; if he bribes the waiter at the hotel with a big tip to wait on him out of his turn; if he "crowds in" at the ticket-office instead of getting in line like a man; if, I say, he finds himself doing that, let him not say, "Well, one must look out for himself in this wicked world. I know it is not nice, but I must do it." Rather let him remember that he does not like that conduct in others, and others do not like it in him. Let him say, "This is piggish, and it will grow to be hoggish, and by and by I shall be justly called a human hog."

If a man finds himself saying, "Well, I do not know about this matter of Jesus. Let that get settled elsewhere"; that is unbelief in Jesus; and the unbeliever has no part with Jesus; and that means that the hope, and the help, which Jesus gives is not his. Christ's care, his promises, his hope, his heaven, his likeness at the last—all these he drops out of his hand when he drops Christ from his faith. Do not call it "honest doubt." Doubt whom? What would you say if your wife should say, "John, I have doubts about your loyalty to me"? Honest doubt! What would your banker

say if you told him you have an "honest doubt" of his financial integrity? What would your friend say if you told him that you honestly doubted his friendship? The more you protest the honesty of your doubt, the more damning your doubt becomes. You may have *inquiries* about Jesus. You will have great and honest, and in some things inevitable, *ignorance* of him, but do not attempt to sugar-coat your unbelief with the name "honest doubt." Call it *unbelief,* if it is unbelief, and face the consequences.

You may find yourself worrying about little things: do not call it nervousness, call it little faith. You may be without glorious anticipations: do not call it lack of imagination, call it hopelessness. Call your critical disposition uncharitableness. Call harsh criticisms of all things cynicism, and that, if literally translated, is doggishness, for "cynic" is the Greek word for dog. Call your hesitation to ask God for help, prayerlessness. When you have an audience with yourself, tell yourself the facts. Mr. James B. Colgate once said to me, "I pity the sons of kings, for no one dares tell them their faults to their faces." Tell yourself your faults once in a while to

your face with courage. Get a true diagnosis of your case and name it in English—not Latin. In New England, near Canada, there used to be what the doctors called, when wealthy people had it, a "troublesome eczema," but when common folk had it, it was plain "*Canada-itch.*" Call not your covetousness an "eczema," but the old-fashioned "*money-itch.*" Name your ebullition of unkind words quick-temper; and your pious economy in missions what the prophet called it, *stealing from God.* When you have had such an interview with yourself, you will feel as if your soul was coming from the Osteopaths. You will be sore in heart. But it will bring forth good.

Again, search with the candle of the Scriptures. They are the highest standard for goodness we have. No men have written more pointedly and profitably than the writers of the Book of books. The goldsmith takes our jewelry and puts a drop or two of acid on it and lets it stay awhile. If the metal is not good, there will come little bubbles of gas, and changes in color; then the surface gets roughened because the acid has found the metal that is not gold. The Scriptures, if you apply them to your

life and hold them there, will soon reveal to you what you have not seen of alloy in your conduct. For example: "Be not fashioned according to this age." That is, do not regulate your conduct by the principles which those follow who are not calculating on another life after this one. "Avenge not yourselves." "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth." "Let all bitterness and wrath, and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you." "Put away all wickedness and guile and hypocrisies and envies and evil speakings." "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." These, and similar passages, held up by the side of our lives, will soon make known to us in what particulars we are deficient.

This sort of examination is not pleasant to make. It is not at all well to make such too often, and thus to become morbid, or discouraged about ourselves. But we are to make the examination simply as preliminary and for the sake of improving ourselves. Let one take some hours for this examination, as if he were about to move into himself to live; and before he moves in he wishes to repair his dwelling because it is unsanitary. Let him go through it, upstairs

and down, to see what needs to be done. Are there any old decaying grudges left over from last year's social life which must be taken from the cellar of memory? Do all bitterness and jealousy and unkind thought get carried off daily in the great drain of forgiveness? Is there any shadowy upas tree of envy which makes it hard to be cheerful and glad at others' prosperity? Are the living and sleeping rooms of the heart, where he will stay most of the time, open toward the sunny side of things so that he gets a little sun of cheerfulness part of every day? Such examination will not be oppressive, but (when we remember that Jesus' special business with mankind is to "save them from their sins," and that he is "able to save to the uttermost"), will be an effective and profitable exercise in the cultivation of goodness.

And in all this pray with the psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the Way Everlasting."

III

NATURE'S ASSISTANCE

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth: and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself."—Mark 4 : 26-28.

I UNDERSTAND this word of the Saviour to teach us that in the very nature of things there is an arrangement which makes for righteousness all the time, as the forces of the earth lie in wait for the seed to make it fruitful. All the year sun, air, and land seem to watch for the hand of man "as the eyes of a maid are unto the hand of her mistress," and when he sows the seed, at once without any delay, these forces are at work to bring forth the harvest.

I take it that there is thus an inherent and latent power in men, predisposed to the production of goodness. It is wrought into the nature of things; and when we meet the conditions, this power works with us to will

and to do right. It is an important part of the theory of at least one school of medicine that nature is seeking to set ills right; the physician only reenforces nature.

So is the kingdom of God among men, and in men; it is the normal thing; all else is abnormal.

I spoke to you last Sunday on the necessity to search with diligence and unflinching fidelity into our own motives, and habits, and moral judgments, to discover what, if any, are the things which need to be remedied. If some of you have tried to do that, I doubt not you have come to the same conclusion that Benjamin Franklin once did. He had made twelve rules by which to guide his moral life. After a time he discovered that he was getting proud of his goodness; so he added another rule, namely, that he would be a praying man, as that would break his pride and produce humility. After a time he said that he was surprised to find that he had so many faults which he had not before discovered.

More faults than we thought we had! Less real goodness than we had given ourselves credit for! That as likely as not is the experience of all who have searched for

the inside facts of their life. Those who have had such an experience are in condition to think upon the topic of this morning.

There are two lines of procedure for us. One is to find general help, and the other is to find specific help for specific faults. It is to the first that I ask your attention here.

If we may follow the analogy of medical science, instead of agriculture, we may say that many spiritual troubles are best treated constitutionally. They are the results, not of any specific evil intent, but of a "general spiritual debility," or of bad religious atmosphere; and when these are corrected, the troubles go.

Prefacing all endeavors with a prayerful spirit, we may say that the first assistance of nature is physical health.

There has been among the English people a sort of undercurrent of suspicion that a robust man or woman is handicapped in the endeavor to be exceptionally religious. Misinterpreting Paul's writings, it has been thought that the "flesh" is the mortal enemy of the spirit; and that to "mortify the flesh" is a necessity for the best life of the soul. The saints of the English Catholic Church of the Middle Ages

were lean, cadaverous, pale-blooded people who ate little and slept less, but prayed very much. A saint was a man whom one would be glad to have as a companion when he was sick, but with whom he would not want to go to dinner when well. This conception of saintliness has filtered down through the English-speaking world, and even now some residuum of it remains, though it has been greatly modified of late years. The motto of the Y. M. C. A. expresses a hopeful drift of thought on the matter, "A sound mind, in a sound body." Respectable athletic activities are no longer thought of as in a subtle way antagonistic to spiritual life. Probably there is no need now to defend such athletics from the charge of being unchristian; but it still remains needful to remind ourselves that good robust health and buoyant physical spirits are not only not contrary to true goodness, but are to be cultivated as one means to goodness. It is not so easy to be sweet in spirit with a sour stomach as without one; hence the duty to sweeten the stomach. It requires more determination to be calm in mind when one has the jumping toothache than when one does not have it; hence the duty to attend

to the teeth. Dyspepsia loads a man with great difficulty when he tries to be a hopeful and cheery Christian; hence a wise Christian seeks to avoid dyspepsia. We will not say that the mind cannot rise above these fleshly ills, and maintain in spite of them the proper spirit; for our acquaintance furnishes cases where it seems as if ills made a background for displaying the glory of a Christian victory. But it costs a greater effort to do this in poor than in good health; therefore the cultivation of good health becomes an important aid in the cultivation of goodness. It is a poor outlook for true piety when overeating, or oversmoking, or undersleeping, or inordinate excitement, or overwork are not only sapping the physical vitality, but somehow throwing sand into the delicate machinery of the soul and making it creak and grind and stop. So we all find that to improve health is to make good, wholesome Christian life easier.

St. Augustine taught in his book of Christian ethics that all virtue comes out of one principle, dividing into four main streams of influence.[1] That principle is love. And love applied to the physical part of us con-

[1] "Morals of Cath. Ch.," Chap. XV, XXV.

sists in such self-control of all our physical powers that they may all serve God. I think Paul had the same thing in mind when he wrote to the Romans, "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies"—not sick, nor half-dead, but living—"living sacrifices"—all the faculties full, buoyant, strong—"holy, acceptable to God, which is your rational 'liturgy'!"

Again, it is written, "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit; therefore glorify God in your body."[2] And I think it will be found that good health has always been the ready handmaid to goodness. The improvement, therefore, of individual health, or the lifting of the general physical welfare of a community, is an important aid to the coming of the kingdom of God among men; the physician takes his place among the spiritual forces of the world; the teacher of good hygiene is one of the missionaries of the Most High; and the care of the health is a part of Christian sanctification.

The second assistance is *the sense of our Lord's personal interest.* I am speaking to

[2] 1 Cor. 6 : 19.

Christians now, and therefore I have no need to defend the statements I am about to make. To some other people I might make a differently worded statement. But even Christians get into what we call a "far country." They do not always have the keen sense of being a people whose hope lies in *Christ Jesus*. And you know there is a great difference between accepting Christ's teachings and living in a sort of daily fellowship with him. His teachings about morality might be true, and he himself be as dead as Socrates. I think it is a tendency quite strong, and very common, to think of the Christian life as mainly a life "lived after the Christian rule." Men may say "Yes, Christ's way is the best way, and whether he now lives or not, we will follow his way." That kind of thinking about it, while it has its merits, and does some good in a way, is so far short of the best way that one is in doubt whether or not to call it a "splendid vice" of thinking. The New Testament does not present the Christian life as a life lived after Christian rules but a life in partnership with Christ. Paul wrote that if Christ be not raised, our faith is vain. To him the living Christ was the

soul of living. Suppose a boy, left by his mother for a while, had a list of things given him, which he was to do for his health and comfort; he would put them up where they would be his guide for a time. Suppose that days run on into months and years, and then he learns that his mother is dead. Do you not think that the deep-reaching influence of that list would gradually wane until not much of it was left? The "mother" was out of it, and with "mother" went its best power.

Suppose, now, that instead of the mother having died, she wrote weekly letters reminding him of her wishes; and he wrote to her an account of how he was getting on; would not his whole attitude toward that list, and his zeal in following it, and his enthusiasm in the tasks it assigned him, be very different and more helpful? Now, I know that this illustration is very inadequate, and not quite true to the situation. But yet it brings to your notice the influence on our moral life which comes from our personality being matched by the sense of the personal Christ. I know that we do not have any weekly letters from Christ; I am not advocating any impossible mysticism;

but we do all know that at times we have what Jeremy Taylor called the "practice of the presence of Christ." [3] It is not a common thing; but have you not seen times when you felt as if Christ was with *you?* When some words of Scripture came into mind as if he was there to utter them? Well, what I am saying is that it will be a great help if we can cultivate a permanency of that kind of consciousness.

Doctor Gordon once wrote a book called "How Christ Came to Church." Its origin was in a dream that he had. He saw a stranger sitting with the deacon. After church he asked the deacon who was with him. He replied, "That was Jesus. But he will come again." Jesus had heard Gordon preach about Jesus himself! The reading of that book has made a marked impression on the preaching of many a minister. It drives out of the pulpit many sensational topics. He thinks, "What would Jesus say if he were to come and hear me in his name discuss such and such a thing?" It has smothered many arguments about higher and lower criticisms; for the minister

[3] "Holy Living," Chap. I, Sec. 3; Jer. 23 : 24; Heb. 4 : 13; Acts 17 : 28.

thought, "What would my Master say if he were to find me giving Sunday service to those endless discussions which gender strife but make no man holier or happier. It keeps out much human-wise philosophy, and all flamboyant rhetoric, and many domineering tones.

It gives a new dignity to think that Jesus is observant of our daily duties. Whether it be to cook or to sew; to sell goods or to make shoes; to doctor the sick or to nurse the babies, it is all a part of God's work, and Christ says do it "unto me." I wish the thought might be more in the hearts of our American people than it is, that manual labor is as Christlike as preaching. The graces of faithfulness, and honor, and truth, and love, may be just as prominent in the commonest labor as in the best of pulpits. The painter may be as kind as the preacher. So, I say, it will help you to think of yourself as doing all things as in *Christ's presence, and unto him.* In that frame of mind every good thing in us puts on new life, as the showers quicken the verdure of the fields. "He shall come down like rain on the mown meadows."[4]

[4] Ps. 72 : 6.

Let no one call this way of thinking childish thinking, and assume that a few men who say there is no personal God represent the real thinking of the world. It is not now, and never has been, the best thought of the best world.

Professor Huxley, the man who appropriated the word agnostic to describe his religious position about some things, said that he learned to believe in God when he fell in love with a girl. When he looked into a certain pair of eyes, abstract virtues became living realities; the world became a new place to him. All virtues seemed nobler; all ambitions higher; the determination to be worthy thrilled every good thing in him. And, thought he, if a "person" in a girl thus glorified the abstract virtues, surely a Person somewhere glorifies the universe.

Browning wrote:

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here the parts shift?
Here the creature surpass the Creator—the end what began?[5]

[5] "Saul," XVII.

Professor Tyndall, who at times seemed almost yielding to the tendency to rob the universe of a God, and make all things consist in impersonal forces, could not rest in that view. "When," said he, "I see the fields becoming green and flowers springing up, I can but inquire: Do I represent the highest intelligence in the universe? And no one who is capable of being moved by a profound thought will be willing to acknowledge (what some have ascribed to me) the creed of an atheist."

The drift of the best thinking outside the church is now toward the position that a personal God must be at the center of all things. No other hypothesis accounts for all the facts. If there were not such a thing as an infinite person who has a will and an intelligence, then man, who has both will and intelligence, would be higher in the scale of being than all. "He that made the eye, can he not see? He that made the reason, can he not reason?" The psalmist was only doing what we all must do at last when he said, "I cannot escape from thy presence."

The third assistance will be found in *regular attendance on the services of the*

church. We do not find in the Scriptures that Jesus commanded the organization of a church, or that men should go to church. The church grew out of the needs of Christian men and women. It has always been helpful for those who had a common aim to get together, and the church is simply a "getting together" for common aims. Doctors get help from the association of physicians; farmers get wealth of suggestion in their farmers' institutes; teachers could not keep up their standing in the wide-awake public schools of the day if they did not meet with those of the same craft and average their knowledge by comparing experiences. So we all gain by association in the worship and work of the church. If we think back over our lives, I am sure we all find that the sources of our best inspirations to duty, and the fountains for our greatest comfort, have been in the meetings of the church for prayer and conference, and in sermons we have heard in the public services. We were led to Christ very largely by the margin of influence which the church added to our home training. And we have "received help until now" by the instruction and the stimulus

which church services have given. I am not forgetting the imperfections of the church. No one knows the imperfections better than the ministers themselves. Rev. Alvah Sabin, a godly minister in Vermont, who remained fifty-two years in one church, said at the fortieth anniversary of his pastorate, "I have no doubt that you have found fault with me in these forty years; but there is no one who has found more fault with me than I have found with myself." To which we ministers say, Amen! But, nevertheless, the church associations, the united singing of God's praises, the intelligent presentation of the truth by the minister, the new views of the Christian privileges which the services often bring to us, and the very evident shining of the Spirit of God into our hearts in the places dedicated to his worship as it does not shine in other places—all these will be helpful. I am made the more confident in this view of church-going by the fact that taking things as they are, the best average Christian life is found among those who are, as the political world would say, "candidates for it." We may not say that all who go are exceptionally good, nor that any who go are faultless.

But the great current of goodness is found running out from the church-going portion of the people, like John's "river of life from out of the throne of God." The man who wants help in being good will always do well to go where they make a business of cultivating it. A man seeking musical training does not go to a labor union, but to a conservatory of music; the man seeking medical skill does not go to an art school, but a medical college. The churches are the schools for goodness; that is their special mission; and they will help all who seek their training.

The fourth assistance is *the study of the Scriptures with this improvement of life specifically in mind.* The Scriptures, said Paul, are given that the "man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work." He said they are "profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." When John wrote his Gospel, he said he wrote it "that men might know that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing they might have life." A friend of mine used to say that he did not think he knew a passage of Scripture until he had tried to practise it. This kind of study will

enrich you amazingly. Ask when you read it:

How can this book nurse my virtue, nerve my will,
Chasten my passions, purify my love,
And make me in some goodly sense like Him
Who bore the cross of evil while he lived,
Who hung and bled upon it when he died,
And now in glory wears
The victor's crown![6]

"How," said the psalmist, "can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

The good of all Christian ages have been scripture students after that sort; not always correct in their historical, or even theological ideas of Scripture, but filled with the moral quality which sanctifies the book. The priests of the Jewish nation carefully taught their scriptures to all; Jesus was familiar with the Old Testament; the apostolic preaching was saturated with it; then Paul, with his great mind and greater wisdom of love, gave us most detailed ideas of what is becoming for us to do. It will hardly be possible for you to read the book with the purpose to improve your life and

[6] Holland, "Bitter Sweet."

not find it stimulating all that is good in you and rebuking all that is not good.

The fifth aid to our cause is a *high estimate of our own worth.* I am aware that at first thought this will seem to some as at variance with the Christian teaching. We are all familiar with the doctrine of inherent and total depravity. We have been taught to say that we are saved by grace alone, and to sing hymns that belittle ourselves. And from some standpoints that is well. For the purpose of justification, we have no merit sufficient to claim it. And it was in a discussion about justification that most of these things were written. Jesus is not reported as having said any such things. But we are in error when we think we have no true worth. Stating the case in a commercial way, it may be that we are properly called "moral bankrupts." But suppose for a moment that that way of stating the case was a good one, and we reckon up our good deeds and put them in one column, ledger fashion; and then reckon the bad deeds and put them in another column; and suppose it is true that such a reckoning gives a balance against us, what then? are we therefore of no worth?

Take another commercial illustration. Suppose that a man had a franchise for a street railroad on Pennsylvania Avenue. He has been a poor manager; he has spent much and received less; he has no money in the bank; and he owes debts many and large. In what sense is he bankrupt? If he should be sold out, would the price of his "quick assets" be all that he would command in the market? Would not his franchise be worth a fortune? The right to do business on that avenue, when properly managed, will pay his debts, and much more. Now, if we are to take the commercial way of expressing this case of ours, admit that we have mismanaged our case; admit that we have not much to our credit, and a good deal to our discredit; yet is not our franchise to live worth something? Is it not a princely fortune in itself because of the possibilities it contains? The right to live and to do business! The right to be called the children of God! Is not that something? Let us look at the facts calmly. We are, among all the wonders of creation, the highest within our knowledge. The organism of plants is less delicate than our eyes; the instincts of animals, though more subtle

than ours, are inferior to our reason; the strength of animals is inferior to our controlling inventions; and nature itself is made to be subservient to man; so that from the goat to the elephant, animals become our *servants*. Then we have language, so that our invention of printing enables us to build on the experiences of the past as corals build their homes—up from the bottom of the sea to the sunlight. We have affections beyond any other creatures; and our religious yearnings, which show us to be constitutionally related to two worlds. Then consider what goodness of heart and life has been in others; and remember that every grace which any man has had is potentially, if not actually, ours. Such thoughts, I say, rebuke the slander which some, with pious intent, utter against themselves when they say they are "unworthy worms of the dirt." For myself, I do not admit that I am an unworthy "worm of the dirt." I am unworthy of what God does for me. But I am not a "worm," nor "of the dirt." I am a being in the image of God, and so are you. As Sir Thomas Browne put it, "There is surely a piece of Divinity in us, something that was before the elements, and owes no

homage unto the sun. Nature tells me I am the image of God, as well as Scripture. He that understandeth not this much hath not his introduction, or first lesson, and is yet to begin the alphabet of man." [7]

For many centuries God has been interested in men; he taught them by the prophets and by the priests; he shaped human history to exalt them; and finally Christ came and lived and died for their sakes. He sent out his apostles and his church to tell men their worth, and his love; his Spirit now comes to each one of us with its influences to uplift us. Shall we then say of ourselves that we are worthless? If the psalmist, looking at the stars, could say, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, what is man that thou art mindful of him," surely we, when we consider not only the work of God in the heavens but in history, may say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God." [8] I think the strongest appeal to men is made, not through their fears of some punishment, but to their sense of personal dishonor to themselves when they come short of the

[7] "Letter to a Friend," p. 116. [8] 1 John 3 : 1.

Christian life. For one to be obliged to say, "I, who have knowledge and opportunity, am wasting upon trifles the possibilities God gave me. I am being a nobody when I might be *somebody*"; this is awakening. One of the most common stimulants to all that is good in us is the thought of what an exalted life man, in many instances, has attained. Remember also that it is not the immature and worm-eaten apples that are the index to the tree, but the healthy, sun-ripened ones. That is what man's franchise to live implies.

> How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
> All the heart and soul and the senses forever in joy![9]

And the last general help I will mention is *Work—some form of Christian work*. It is one of the fundamental principles of education that the pupil must be encouraged to talk, and think, and do. He is a poor teacher who simply tells students facts, or gives advice. The aim of teaching is not to fill the head but to lead out latent powers. So, in the tillage of the heart, we

[9] Browning, "Saul," IX.

must exercise the particular part of goodness which we seek to develop. It may be your field of operation is small, and your actual success is not satisfactory. But if you are practising you are gaining.

The grace of faithfulness is as well cultivated in an errand boy as in a banker. The honesty of a small grocery is the same in kind as the honesty of a wholesale establishment. Kindness in a young working man is as fine as kindness in a king. And in the estimate of the world and of God it is the gold which the ore contains, not the place from which it was dug that gives it value. To know that you have practised the virtues in your own sphere brings all the comfort of a clear conscience that men in larger spheres ever find.

To do the Christian things takes us in behind the scenes of Scripture and shows us the hearts of those who wrote. We get the experiences they had, and then we can understand the language.

Then, to do the things we seek to cultivate gives us fellowship with the best of earth. No matter where we live, or with whom we associate in ordinary matters, the sense of having done the Christian things gives us at once a fellowship with all who love Christ. Once, Mr. Moody was on a ship in mid-ocean, one thousand miles from

Queenstown. The shaft had broken and penetrated the side of the ship, and it was slowly filling with water and no help in sight. There seemed to be no hope. Mr. Moody proposed to the captain that a meeting be held in the cabin for prayer, and all who prayed be invited. The captain replied, "*Yes, I am one of that kind.*" So in pleasanter circumstances, all those who have experienced the good that comes from practising the Christian life can say to all the good and great, "*Yes, we are of that kind.*"

Doing creates the habit of thinking and saying the things which are right, and that is goodness. Doing the things, the nature that God has given us and the sacred institutions which his providence has furnished, will work for us night and day, and in the best sense we shall be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

IV

SPECIFIC HELPS FOR UPROOTING SPECIFIC FAULTS

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure."—Phil. 2 : 12, 13.

I HAVE spoken to you on previous Sundays about the value of self-examination to discover the blemishes or deficiencies which need remedying; and tried to impress the idea that a knowledge of our specific faults, while it may humble us, is nevertheless a good thing. And then we have considered together some of the things which constitute what we called nature's assistance. Attention was called to health; and the sense of Christ's presence; and a high estimate of ourselves; and the practice of the virtues we seek to develop.

This morning I wish to speak about specific treatment for uprooting some specific

faults. I would preface what I have to say by the assurance that there is hope for success in this kind of endeavor. There may come to your mind the idea which came to Israel in Ezekiel's time, that we are so great sinners, and so steeped in the ways of sin, and have so often failed in our endeavors that "our hope is lost, our bones are dry." [1] We cannot ever overcome in this world, but must wait for the final exhibition of the grace of our heavenly Father when at the last trump we shall be changed into the holy men and women we desire to be. When this mortal shall have been swallowed up of immortality, then, and not till then, we may hope for our victory. Until then we must wait and pray for patience.

Others may think that such a hope is against the teaching of the accepted theology. I would not purposely belittle theology, nor cast shadow upon the glory of what men have taught as the truth. I would speak with care, and with respect; but I must speak plainly, if at all. And I say that some of what is called theology is "pious lingo." I mean by that phrase

[1] Ezek. 37 : 11.

that it is pious, for it was formulated by pious people with pious intent; and is lingo because it has lost its meaning. It once had a meaning; the words of the Scripture which are woven into it meant great things in the circumstances under which they were uttered; but now these words have in large measure lost their connection with the facts of life. They are as Lowell said:

Words which have drawn transcendent meanings up
From the best passions of all bygone days;
Steeped through and through with tears of triumph and remorse.

Christ Jesus came into the world, and was introduced by the angel as the one who should be called Jesus, "for he would save his people from their sins." That is his special errand. And it does not mean, save them from sin in the abstract; nor from the sins which others have, and which they themselves ought not to have; but save them from the specific sins which they have. If he cannot do that, then he is misnamed Jesus, and should be renamed.

If there is any theology which is in danger by such a hope as that, so much the worse for the theology. Our business and

our hope is to "perfect holiness in the fear of God"; and our text gives us encouragement to work out our salvation in the fact that God works in us toward the same end. In Genesis we are told that before the fall of Adam he was to dress and keep the garden. But after the fall he was sent forth to "till the ground," for no longer does it bring forth fruit without tillage. So now we must "till the heart." But it is not a hopeless task; seed-time and harvest will not fail; the bow of promise bends over us in this text.

Now, when a man lacks lung-power, he is taught exercises which correct that weakness. If he lacks muscular development, he is exercised specifically for that deficiency. On general principles we may expect that if we can know enough of our specific moral deficiencies, we may both uproot evil traits and supply sad deficiencies, and the text comes to us with that hope. *Work out*—that is, finish up—*your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God working in you*—this very desire to overcome is from him—*to will and to work for his good pleasure.* That is the encouragement and guarantee of victory.

One of the most helpful things is suggested by the Saviour's words concerning the empty house. He said that the unclean spirit when he finds the house empty, swept, and garnished, goes and gets seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there.[2] That is, the heart and power of men must be occupied with something good, or the bad will get possession. And along with this is the truth which was expressed by Doctor Chalmers in the title of a sermon, "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection." If a man wants to uproot the tendency to go in bad company, he will do well not to become a hermit, but to seek good company; let him be a social man, but on a higher level. If he has a tendency to light and trivial talk, his wise way is not to stop talking, but to talk about more worthy things. If one has a genius for business, he is not to quit his business activities, and his money-making habits; but rather to attach his business ability to some worthy cause, and then do business "unto the Lord." The remedy for a hot temper is not to become a spineless, indifferent sort of a non-

[2] Matt. 12 : 44.

entity—not to lose one's temper, but to control it, and make it do service in a good cause. The remedy for wilfulness is not to give up under every pressure, but to undertake that which will call for all the wilfulness one has. This, I say, is a good general rule.

To come to more specific things—and while I would speak with all sympathy, I must speak plainly about this matter. Suppose a man has a habit of taking stimulants. In his best moments he feels that he is not right. He at times participates in what he well knows is contrary to good Christian practice in such matters. But he likes the taste and the effect of it. What can he do? I would say, let him not seek to belittle the sense of danger, but to cultivate a still keener sense of it. Let him note how it has already begun to make him insensible to its evil; he is not so much ashamed of it as he used to be; he would drink more if it were not for his family; he is already framing arguments to defend it, and excuses for it. Let him remember that his appetite for it is the same in kind, as that which makes the drunkard's shame. Let him note the effect on others, recalling the

fact that of the men who forsake the church of Christ, nearly all of them go because of this same love of drink. Let him read the Scripture and see how the experience of ages has crystallized into the proverb: "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last"—not at the first, but at the last—"it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."[8]

Then he will do well to analyze his appetite. It may come from some physical weariness. He has exhausted strength of body and nerve in a laudable endeavor to support his family; he has been overworked and, it may be, insufficiently nourished; the stimulant gives a temporary spur that appears to rest him. If that is the case, let him seek the needed help in other ways. Let him sleep more, and feed better.

It may be that his reason is a sort of lonesomeness. He drinks to drown sorrow, and he has sorrow enough to overwhelm him. In that case, let him seek some cheerful company; get into touch with some good family and visit there; or form an acquaintance with the Y. M. C. A., and go

[8] Prov. 23 : 31.

there; or, better yet, get into some helpful temperance work for the young; or visit the sick and the afflicted to do them good. All this has in it the element of mind cure, but in many cases it is very effective.

If his habit has gone so far as to be a gnawing, craving appetite, it has taken the form of a disease, and it needs medical treatment. Consult some good physician and tell him the truth. That phase of appetite is remediable with medicine. It is not necessary to go to a Keeley cure; but that would be honorable. Do not allow yourself to think it is disgraceful to be treated for such a trouble; it is common-sense to use the remedies God's providence has put within reach; take the remedy and pray God to help you, and you will come off conqueror; it has been done in thousands of cases. God wills to work in you to conquer that habit.

It may be you are burdened by sins of the tongue. That sin has many ramifications. The first help I would suggest is sincerely to offer the prayer of the psalmist, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

Then take your concordance and go

through it, looking up the passages of the Bible which tell about the sins of the tongue; this will emphasize your sense of its evil character. Then read and think about what you can find in books and sermons on the subject; in this way you will get the estimate of your fault which your friends will not feel like giving to you.

Then take some time, often at night, to review your speech of the day, to see wherein you have done evil, and discover the root of the matter, and thus be able to guard the next day's talk. Especially inquire, "Why did I say that thing?" You may find that the evil grows out of envy; that is, you do not like others to have more compliments or a greater reputation than yours. "Envy," says the Scripture, "is rottenness of the bones." If you find that is the root, prayerfully undertake to do good to those whom you envy. This is the best antidote for it.

It may be you mean no ill, but you have a satisfaction in showing your ability to analyze people. So you take them all to pieces like a surgeon in the dissecting-room, and talk over all of what you think are the motives. That is a common fault.

Your trouble is that you do not give importance enough to words; they seem to you as so much breath breathed out, and that is the end of it. But as you study the effect of speech, you will find that all words leave a residuum behind them. In some brick arches over the railroad in Philadelphia, the moisture filters through and drops down in the street like pure water. At the point where it comes through the brick there gather little deposits of lime like the stalactites in caves. This is the residuum of lime which the little drops of water left behind. They looked like pure water, but the lime was in them, and some of it remained to tell the story of the water's visit. So some kinds of talk, which were not intended to be harmful, do, nevertheless, leave behind permanent effects—little stalactites of unkind feelings remain in memory.

In such a case, stop and ask yourself, "Why do I do this?" And then ask, "Does it help to make those whom I thus dissect to be better? Does it make those to whom I say this better? Does any one have greater confidence in my friendship? Am I myself any better for it?" And then resolve that you will not discuss people at

all. But you will say, "We must talk; what shall we talk about?" Keep some good, large subject in mind on which you read and think. When you go to call, think beforehand what you are going to talk about. Predetermine the course of conversation. Perhaps have several themes in mind so that if one fails you can take another. There are plenty of them: "Flowers and their cultivation"; "Laws of health and how to keep them"; "The best way to lead the minds of children"; "the beauties of some good book"; "the women of the Bible"; "the women of history"; "the cost of good living"; "the history of some mission field." Our age is full of topics and good reading on the topics—hundreds of them—any one of which will occupy your speech and crowd out the discussion of people. If you cannot succeed in turning the conversation in good channels, try to practise the German statesman's virtue: it was said of him that he could be silent in seven languages; you ought to be able to be silent in one.

It may be that you are given to exaggeration in speech; then try to talk as if you were in court, and would be called to

account for your sayings; for you are in court all the time. "For every idle word we shall give account," said the Saviour. It will help correct this habit of exaggeration to speak only after you have swiftly glanced over your authorities for your statements. If you are to tell the height of a building, think how you know, and where you got your information; if you state a fact in history, recall where you read it; if you describe a thing, describe it as if some one who saw it with you were present to hear you do it. After a little, and it will not take long, you will come to have so much real satisfaction in the accuracy that you will love to be accurate.

It may be that you are covetous. Doctor Ashmore told me once that he had asked several men, who were together, for a definition of covetousness, and they were unable to give him an answer. Covetousness is that estimate of money which gives it more value to us than doing right. Any decisions we make in which we decide for the money against right is the result of covetousness.

At Northfield, this summer, I asked some Christian people who were boarding at the same place, what they thought was the pre-

vailing weakness of the church life in the cities. They said, "Commercialism." That meant, from their standpoint, that in the ministry, and in the pew, things were estimated according to the money value, more than by the righteousness they contain. I suppose that is one phase of covetousness. And the air is full of it.

I once told a member of the church of which I was pastor that such and such a man had been converted and wished to unite with the church. He replied, "Is he a man of property?" Even our so-called religious papers are saturated with the same commercial view of things. They parade the fact that a minister's salary has been raised, or he has accepted a call to a larger salary, as if that were the main thing. If this excessive estimate of money has possession of you, you will find help by taking thoughtful estimate of what you think of one who cares for you only as a boy cares for an orange—for what he can get out of it.

How small you think a man is who has no friendship he will not sell for money! No honor, no truth, no ambition which does not have its money price! What a small

influence such a man exerts on men! He gathers riches, but they do little good. How soon his place fills up when he dies! About a week, and he is forgotten. Study the meanest money sharks you know, and see how little satisfaction there is in their life. Money has value; moneymakers have great usefulness, but a "man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth." [4] Even those who have wealth, and are useful, get their real value to the world, not so much from the wealth as from the qualities it is the sign of, and the good motives and good judgment they have in the use of it. Young men will find great good in studying the lives of the rich to see how the man who has only money takes the smaller, inferior parts in the drama of life. And how much true greatness may be yours without riches. The rich are remembered not so much for their victories in getting money as their victories over it after they get it.

It may be you blame yourself for your lack of interest in missions: You put something into the basket when it comes around, but you do not feel any satisfaction in it. I think you will find help in that matter if

[4] Luke 12 : 15.

you can give to what the missionary secretaries call "specifics." That is, have some special thing in which you are interested, and in which you can trace your own gifts. The real point of interest for all good giving is the *person* who is to be benefited. It does us no good to give to a *basket,* or even to a *society.* We must feel that the basket or the society is but the channel through which our gifts go to some *persons.* Find some family that has need and give your interest along with the money, and you will love to give; get track of some young man and make it easier for him to get an education; choose some mission and send your money to that for a time, and study its progress and you will find missions will have a new charm. I think we shall come by and by to the place where as churches we shall have villages in China and Japan, whose mission work we take care of. And then, when some of us go abroad, we will see what changes have been wrought there by the gospel and will report to our home churches the facts. Then, of giving, we may say as was said of mercy, it is twice blessed. Giving is never the best giving unless it prompts to thanksgiving.

Perhaps you are excessively proud of your blood, or family, and it makes you unsympathetic with those of a different station in life. (I am supposing that you have Christian feeling, and some Christian knowledge.) You know that this feeling you have is not right, but it is hard for you to rid yourself of it. If you examine your feeling, you will find it originates in a shallow view of people. You are judging them by their outside rather than their inside. If you could get into more intimate touch with the classes you now shrink from, you would find that the rare virtues which you do admire are quite as common, and as genuine with them as with others. It is circumstance and separation that has kept you in ignorance of them. If you can get into some closer touch with such people, you will find your estimate growing. Get into relations with some of the Italian or Hungarian families of your city, and you will find that those mothers love their children as you do yours; that fathers take pride in sons as you do; that they all have their yearnings after better things; they have their inner struggles; but, best of all, they love our common Saviour. Tears come

to their eyes at mention of his goodness, as to yours. They make as much sacrifice for our common religion as you do. When you see these things, you will find that your heart goes out to them, and you will be rid of your shrinking from them. Read the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. In the first chapter, he says the far-off aim of God is to gather into one Christ-centered family all nations of men. And in the second chapter, he says: Yes, we Jews were far from the Gentiles. But God raised us up *together* in Christ. And he made us sit *together* in heavenly matters. We are both brought nigh to him and to one another by the sacrifice of Jesus. The middle wall of partition is broken down. And now we are no more strangers, but fellow-citizens and *of the household of faith.* That tells the process by which the peoples of earth are to be kept in the right attitude toward one another. Christian experiences reduce us all to a common level of need; and then exalt us all to a common standing among his own family.

It may be that you have a tendency to complain at your lot in life. It seems to you as if you have a harder time than anybody

in the world. You will find help if you go to visit and help those who are worse off.

Perhaps you have a censorious spirit. It is your easiest work to find fault, and to murmur about things in general. You will find help in this to take a larger view. Suppose for a little that you were in position to control, would you be able to do any better? We all have to take the timber we have, and do the best we can with it. Up in our seminary we cannot make men. We can only train them a little. They are made in the homes and the home churches. If you were disposed to find fault with the seminaries because they do not send out more and better ministers, take our place for a few minutes in imagination, and see what a problem we have. I am sure you will find less fault with us. So is it in most cases. If you will, in imagination, assume responsibility for a few minutes, it will help you to overcome the faultfinding spirit.

But I have said enough to show you that faults have roots out of which they grow. If you can find the roots you can quite effectively dispose of them. You can be conquerors, and more than conquerors,

through Christ's help. I am not saying that you will get into perfection at once. Nor am I saying that you will get past your need for struggle and watchfulness; that will not come in this world. But you will make a steady progress, and become more and more like the Christian ideal. I urge you not to be discouraged, but with care examine your hearts and find the roots of your faults; then, with prayer and perseverance, undertake to remove them. For—to keep to our figure of tillage—harvests are not the work of a day, but of a season. The early and the latter rain are required. But in "due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not"; "for it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."

V

THE AIM OF OUR TILLAGE, AND HOW WE LEARN IT

"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk, even as he walked."—1 John 2 : 6.

AS long as two thousand six hundred and thirty-four years before Christ, Chinese history tells of the use of the magnetic needle as a guide in the fog. This needle's peculiarity, as we know, is that when it is poised nicely, so that it is free to turn, it will under every circumstance swing on its pivot, and after vacillating back and forth soon settle down, pointing to the north. The mystery of this propensity still baffles the scientist, and excites his wonder. This propensity well illustrates a noted phenomenon of our life older than Chinese history. It is found in all men since men have been known. Every one has within him a certain mysterious something which, when he is free to follow

its impulses, turns his conduct toward a certain direction. A man may, by his family connections, or by health, business, politics, church connections, or other environment, be hindered from following what is his inner choice of life; but when some crisis arrives which sets him free from his bondage to environment, that inner mystery turns him to his inner choice. We see this exemplified in cases where men go from home to new countries, or cities; they at once follow their inner choice. It may be that they appear to become better men, or perhaps worse men; but in reality they only reveal what they have all the time been at heart.

This inner mystery, which thus draws men toward what they would like to be, has so far escaped scientific explanation. The character of a mystery clings to it. Perhaps for our use it will be acceptable to call it the instinct of self-satisfaction, or self-preservation; or, in its best form, the instinct of self-completion.

It has its parallel in the physical world. The flower is thrilled from its rootlet to the tips of its leaves, with a wondrous, ceaseless activity in perfecting its fruit. The body of

a healthy child is, without our help, working in accord with its constitution to mature the body. Its various functions work automatically to make blood and bones and muscle. So this mystery of life works to satisfy the "self." To change the figure, it might be called the propeller of life.

As the propeller in a ship, which lies deep down and out of sight, exerts itself against wind and current to move the ship in its course, so this instinct maintains our endeavors toward the haven of our desires. It is a "constant" force.

The gunner aims his piece high above the target, and fires it with a charge that sends the shot flying at two thousand or two thousand two hundred feet a second. An inexperienced man might think that it would, by its velocity, escape the force of gravity, and endlessly fly on into space; but we know from invariable experience that, while the force with which it is sent out is exhausting itself with the resistance of the air, the force of gravity, with no diminution, and no intermission, is pulling the shot earthward; and after a little it will either strike the target on its way down or be humiliated upon the earth itself. This force

the mathematicians call a "constant" force. So this inner "mystery" of ours is a "constant." It must be reckoned with in all moral calculations. A traveling salesman told me that when he is selling goods to a new customer, he always tries to find out what the man's ambition is. Does he have a family to care for? Is he trying to educate them? Is he seeking to build up a business? Is he paying for a home? Or, is he a bit of flotsam on the business sea? The answer he gets to these questions determines the amount of credit he will give him, for he is sure that that man's inner purpose in life, if he has one, will regulate his business integrity. The young woman who goes abroad for a musical education chooses her cities of residence where musical opportunities abound. She selects her hotel, or *pension,* and picks her companions, with reference to the same purpose. If she goes abroad to obtain a title, she goes where titles are procurable with what she has to furnish. It is a great feature of human life. We should be dehumanized if it were possible to obliterate this from our constitutions.

And it is a great good to us; without

that we could have no character; we could make no prophecy to-day how a man will act to-morrow: we should simply "be tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine."

This is as true of those who have a good purpose as for those who have a bad one; and men are as steadfast in pursuit of wrong ends as they are in the following of good ones.

Out of this constitution of ours grows the importance of securing a good aim in life. If this inner "mystery" is always lending itself to the aim, whether that aim be good or bad, What sort of persons do men seek to become? What haven do their ambitions seek to reach? or, to put it in other phrase, What is their aim? are vital questions, for the difference between men morally is found in the type of men they seek to be. The poet wrote: "'Tis not what man does which exalts him, but what man would do." [1] And Paul had a similar view when he said: "It is not I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." [2]

At this point we are met by a very common error in speech and thinking. It

[1] Browning, "Saul," XVIII. [2] Rom. 7.

is said, "Conscience will give direction to us. If we would only be more conscientious, we should be in the right path." I am sure none of us would speak lightly of conscience, or of conscientiousness. But we must speak truly; and it is not true that conscience gives us any direction about where the haven of our desires ought to be. Conscience is of no more value in sailing the voyage of life successfully without instruction and ideal than a compass is in sailing the ocean, if there is no chart to supplement it; and no desire to get anywhere in particular. Conscience only presses home on us the sense of oughtness. It says: "You ought and you must, if you crave peace, do what is right. Woe is to the man who does not do what is right." But it never tells what is right: that must come from the ideal and from instruction. To trust ourselves, or those under our care, to the guidance of conscience without instruction, is like turning a child loose in a drugstore when it is ill. No! Our intelligence has its functions as well as our conscience, and both are needed to give us true goodness.

I have spoken formerly about the neces-

sity of a right aim, or ideal. I wish to speak more fully about that this morning. The text points out the Christian's ideal. "*We ought to walk as Christ walked.*" John was not discussing this as a teacher of pedagogy, or of psychology, but his words are in harmony with our thinking in both these departments. The ideal of the true Christian is Christ. His inmost longing will be expressed in the prayer we sing: "More like Jesus would I be." "Every one that has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure." [3]

And by the way of parenthesis, I may say that as in the compass a needle will not point to the north, unless it has the magnetic quality so that it responds to the mystery of the magnetic pole, so the inner instincts of our hearts must have the Christ quality or they will not respond to the Christ ideal. (I am speaking to such as have this quality; who have been magnetized toward goodness.) The chief of what I would say is, that a man may hunger and thirst after goodness, and yet need to find out in detail what sort of a man he ought to be. We say, "Be like Christ," but

[3] 1 John 3 : 3.

he replies, "Yes, I want to be like him; but how am I to know what he would do in my circumstances?"

A book was written, called "In His Steps."[4] It has been translated into many tongues, and sold by millions of copies. It was originally a story, written by a minister, and read serially by chapters to his congregation Sunday evenings in lieu of a sermon. It is an utterly impracticable story; it abounds in theory which would not sanctify business, but destroy it. And yet, in spite of this, at first sight, seeming folly, there is present in the midst of its every scene, a kindly sort of a specter whom society does not fear, but welcomes. It does not speak, but it lends a charm to all the situations, and that is the endeavor to be Christlike. That gave the book its charm. We cannot walk in his steps literally, because he did not walk where we must go. He made no steps as a husband, or father, or business man, or pastor, or deacon, or Sunday-school superintendent, or choir leader, or political leader. But he exhibited certain great fontal traits of character which can control the life of men and women in all

[4] Rev. C. M. Sheldon, Topeka, Kans.

circumstances. Paul expressed the idea when he wrote to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."[5] *The mind of Christ.* That is the norm of Christian life.

How, then, do we get this in detail? The first source of our knowledge comes from those *individual Christian friends* whom we love in childhood. Something about them wins our confidence and affection. After a time we learn that they are Christians, and that they are what they are because they are Christians. Then we find other friends in whom these traits which we admire are strong; and we find that they are Christians; we soon discover that these qualities are almost invariably associated with Christians; then we come to think that they are a part of the Christian conception. And if we think of being Christians ourselves, we think that we must have such traits. These qualities are to us the trade marks of the kingdom. They manifest the Christ-spirit to us; they are Christ manifest in his people.

The second source of our ideal is the *Bible.* We have the Sunday-school lessons, presented by teachers whom we re-

[5] Phil. 2 : 5.

spect; they tell us much, they show by example more of what Christ taught. We hear sermons which give us light and vision in some larger way. Then we read for ourselves the stories of Jesus, and the words of approved men in the Old Testament, and the instructions of the apostles; and from them we get corrected and enlarged conceptions of the Christ-life. The detail of the portraiture of the good man in the New Testament is very striking. The specific instructions are numerous and accurate. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount, how full is the detail! At the outset we have the description of the general character of those who are members of the kingdom; the poor in spirit, the men who sorrow for their sins, the hungry for righteousness, the meek, the merciful, the peacemaker, the pure in heart. Then follows the responsibility of these to let the light shine, and to keep the world from corruption. Now we are told what to do with the "law"; sins of the tongue are rebuked; formalism is condemned; the spirit in which we should do our religious work, and in which we should pray is indicated; and then our duties in connection

with some of the great temptations of life get notice. Lest we should lack some detail, the fountain principle from which all flow is disclosed to us is in the Golden Rule.

Going over into the writings of the apostles we find such things as these: Think on the things of others; be gracious to others as God is gracious to you; bear one another's burdens; be kindly affectioned one toward another. Again, "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love, for if these be in you and abound, they make that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."[6] And then, as if he would be sure that the smile on the face of love should not be left out of the portrait, he gives us the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, in which love is portrayed in a beautiful way. He tells us that love suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked,

[6] Peter 1 : 5-8.

thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. It never faileth; it is the greatest of the graces. It is astonishing, when we examine it, to see how specific the lines of the Christian ideal are made in the Bible; and they are all lines drawn with a fine brush dipped in the colors on the Christ palette, the cardinal hues of the Christian rainbow; and, if you please to continue the figure, in it you may find the Fraunhofer lines of the Christian spectrum.

The ancient writer, who had less of a Bible than we have, said, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."[7] We who have a book much more full, and the life of Christ in addition, certainly find more abundant reason to honor the word. Oom Paul Kruger once said of the Bible in the company of some English and German soldiers who were discussing their national literature:

I have not half mastered its glories, yet I have read it day and night for well-nigh forty years. When I have exhausted the Bible, I'll perhaps find

[7] Ps. 119 : 9.

time for Shakespeare and Goethe. Tell me, had either of those men more wisdom to teach than I can learn from the book of Proverbs? Could either of them write such glorious lines as King David, the ancient poet of the Jews, has left us in his wondrous book of Psalms? Could either Shakespeare or Goethe have written the Songs of Solomon? If I want to read of hunting, I find it in the Bible. If I want to read of love, where, in all the books of the world, is love described so simply and yet so beautifully as in the Bible? If I want to read of war or ambition, need I go further than the Bible? If I want an example of patience, can I do better than study the book of Job? If I feel tempted by a woman, can I learn the folly of such things better than by picturing the mighty Samson shorn of his strength and his eyesight through the treachery of Delilah? Do I think of the friendship of man for man? Tell me, you bookworms, where, in all the libraries of Europe, can I read of anything so well told as the love of David for his friend Jonathan?

Can any books teach a son's duty to his father better than the Bible? What book or books can better guide a man in his duty to his country? Burn nine-tenths of the books in the world to-day, and give each boy and girl a Bible, and the next generation of men and women would be braver and better, more hopeful and courageous, more charitable and thoughtful, more lovable and more content than the men and women of to-day seem to be.

A third source of our ideal is our *Reason*. We take the great principles of Christ's life and teachings and apply them to the various situations and questions which arise. Love is the controlling motive, we are told. That is a sort of major premise in our reasoning process. We think "Love works no ill to his neighbor. Will this which I am about to do work ill? If so, then I may not do it." That was Paul's reasoning in the matter of eating meat offered to idols. He wrote, "If meat cause my brother to stumble, I will eat no meat while the world stands." [8]

In the matter of the Sabbath. Have you thought what a blessed institution the Sabbath is? And have you remembered that of all the nations of the world none has had a day set aside in which the toiler was protected in a day of rest? Listen to all the commands of all the kings in all the nations, and you will nowhere find anything like the fourth command of Moses, the man of God. Everywhere is toil and labor for the common people all the time. But to Israel, God said, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. In it thou shalt not

[8] 1 Cor. 8 : 13.

do any servile work. Neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." [9] Oh, how blessed that is! The working man may rest; the command of the superintendent may have no force that day; the children may see their father; the family may sing together the songs of praise to God, for God hallowed the Sabbath Day and blessed it. Now there are strong temptations, and some wicked attempts to deprive the common people of this day of rest; what is the Christian ideal duty in the matter? Reason must come in to help answer, and this must be the process: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Will this loss of the Sabbath work ill? Then I must be on the side of preserving the day from toil."

Or, take another matter, and we reason thus: "Jesus left the consummation of his work to his church; no other organization in the world has for its aim the preaching of this gospel of hope and comfort to men; if the church does not attend to it, the lamp of God will go out in the world. We are

[9] Exod. 20.

members of his church. What, then, is our duty to the mission work of the church?"

Or another, "Jesus' aim is that peace and good-will shall prevail in the world; and we are the light of the world. Does our duty lie in the line of great navies and armies, and military parades, and excitement of the war spirit, or in the line of those victories which peace hath, more glorious than blood-bought ones?"

There are sociological wrongs to be remedied. Christ said, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." What does reason say to us about our duty in these times when all the world is astir with awakening altruism?

We must think out these matters. "We cannot direct the world life unless we can direct its thought."

A fourth source for our ideal is *environment*. This has several departments. We absorb it in a large measure unconsciously from our associations. It is a blessed thing for a young Christian to have the first impressive years of his church-membership in a church where the right ideals are common. I am sure that a man or woman who should be privileged to be-

gin the Christian service here, in this church, where the spirit of forbearance and love are so marked, where the missionary work has so strong a hold on the hearts, where pastor and people are a unit in their ambitions to do good, will find a trend given to their lives that will be an immeasurable blessing in after years. If they go away, yet they will carry the impress of it for life. How different would it be if they went into a church where the trustees forbid a collection for missions because the current expenses are wanting more money; and where the spirit of jealousy among the members is rife, and the yawning gulf of discord gaps between pastor and people! We cannot overestimate the blessing of being where the standard of honor, and dignity, and reverence, and forgiveness, and zeal for others is high.

And we are also affected by our reading. I examined yesterday one of our Philadelphia papers, the one which has as much odor of sanctity as any of them—the "Public Ledger." I found on three pages of its news, sixty-two articles. Of these, eighteen were general world news; eleven were cases of death or accident; five told of noble deeds

of men or women; and twenty-eight were the records of "man's inhumanity to man"—crimes, or divorce suits, or quarrels. I am not passing judgment on the papers, but I am saying that the reading of such things every morning for three hundred days in a year—not to mention the Sundays—must have a serious effect on the moral vision, and on the moral ideal of life, unless it be counteracted by some mighty power. It may be offset by reading much of the better sort of biography, where the better side is made prominent.

A fifth source for our ideals is what may be called *moral visions,* or flights of moral imagination. Whatever they may be called, those are times when we imagine people in whom our notions of virtue and honor are carried up to completeness. We think of the men and women like whom we would be. We take the broken or embryonic samples of virtues which we have and think of them as mended or matured. We put them into full measure and correct proportion. We people our thought with such. We put into their hearts purity and love, and beautify their faces with kindness. We endow them with courage

and loyalty. We adorn them with the graces of politeness and courtesy. We honor them with the confidence of mankind. Then we build up communities of them, and think how blessed it would be if the world were all such; and how glorious it will be when that consummation has come! These are, I say, flights of imagination. But what was our imagination given us for if not for such flights? What do we know of heaven except in that way? These times are "mountains of transfiguration" to us. We see not the coarse or soiled garments which the world wears, but the real glory of human life is revealed as it shines through its humble vestments, now "white as no fuller on earth can white them." The faces of men are made glorious to us. We see them and ourselves at their best. And we, like Peter, wish we could tabernacle in that state of mind. But we cannot; we must come down from the mountain, and we may find a demon there which alone we cannot cast out. But though we come down, we never come all the way down again. Those visions of what man can be give us an insight and an impulse which make life henceforth a different journey. There are

conceptions of the men and women we ought to be, and can be, which will beckon us on forever afterward. Our ideal of life is better and clearer.

These, then, are the channels through which there comes to us our idea of the aim of life: our Christian friends, the Scriptures, our reason, our church environment, and these transfigurations. Each one is a God-appointed channel of blessing. We cannot have clear ideas without the use to some extent of them all. Jesus used them all, and we, to that extent, may walk in his steps.

VI

WHAT THE IDEAL IS

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might become rich."—2 Cor. 8 : 9.

LAST Sunday I spoke to you concerning the aim, or ideal, of our husbandry, and indicated some of the sources from which our conceptions of the Christian life come. In order to guard against the idea that such conceptions are wholly obtained either unconsciously or automatically, I emphasized the teaching that we are to "work out" our own salvation in part, and to have courage in the work because God works in us to the same end.

This morning I wish to speak to you, indicating some of the leading features of the ideal Jesus left to us by his own life.

And, *first,* I notice the high estimate which Jesus put upon the common life of the common man.

Paul wrote that Jesus, though he was in the form of God. . . yet made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of a man—just an unadorned man; no titles; no adjuncts.[1] We should certainly have made a different arrangement. The Jews, in their notions of the Messiah whom they expected, thought that all Israel would be astonished at his light, and say, " Blessed is the hour of his birth, blessed is the eye that sees him, glory and majesty are in his appearance." They thought he would be educated in human lore at royal expense as was Moses, and that the knowledge of God would come to him direct without having need to learn.[2] They could not think that a Messiah could exist without the help of exceptional circumstances. Common humanity was too cheap. The Roman Catholic Church, for theological reasons, has the same lack of honor for humanity. They must have him born of some other stuff than mortal woman. So they invent the hypothesis that Mary was exempt from the natural sin of her race—" immaculately conceived," as they express it. All this be-

[1] Phil. 2. [2] See Edersheim, Vol. I, Chap. V.

littles the substance of humanity and exalts to front rank circumstances which are the mere trimmings of it. Jesus had a different view. He did not come to succor angels, nor kings, nor millionaires, nor college professors, nor theologians as such. A Southern evangelist was once holding meetings, and Judge Corwin—"Tom Corwin"—of Ohio, was interested in the work. He called one evening to talk with the evangelist. He was told by that Elijah, "Judge Corwin will probably be excluded from the company of the saved." Upon his expressed surprise at such a statement, the reply came, "Tom Corwin, the sinner, has a chance, but Judge Corwin is not known at the throne of grace."

Christ came to save man as man, not as king or peasant, because as man he was an inestimable treasure for which Christ would give his life. It was men and women as such, neither honored nor smirched with taint of royal blood, neither ennobled nor debased with the fruits of greed, not purified nor debauched with luxury—whom he sought to uplift. And, therefore, he came in the guise of such; not to be born in the palace of a king, nor the home of the rich,

but in the home of a peasant carpenter, to the bosom of a godly peasant mother. It seems to me the Scripture story of the angel's words to Mary are the very nakedness of truth, "Hail, Mary, highly favored . . . blessed art thou among women." [8]

No greater honor could have been given to sweet and pure womanhood than that this modest girl should be the mother of Jesus and that the Saviour of mankind should be entrusted to her untrained but loving hands. The Son of God wrapped in swaddling bands by her and laid in a manger, under her eyes!

Let me repeat this thought, for it easily escapes us. If King Edward Seventh were to come to America and should arrange to be entertained at the home of some coal miner, and truly spend his time among them, would not every miner in the land feel that if any stigma ever had attached to his occupation, it would now forever be removed? And he would be right in his view of the case. If the king should claim the hospitality of the Negroes of a city, it would remove the social lines with a shock hard to be forgotten. It would be a decla-

[8] Luke 1 : 28.

ration unmistakable that the king honored, and meant to honor, the race of black men as fellow-mortals, and fellow-citizens of the kingdoms of men. But it is not less plain that Jesus, in deliberately choosing the family of a peasant, meant to set aside all those conceptions of the world which overlook the essential glory of plain, unadorned human nature. And if Jesus were to return and come to this city, and into the family of some member of this church, he would not come to the family of any one whom you or the city calls great, or noted. He would certainly be found in the family of some godly, common man, some artisan of religious faithfulness; and some godly woman who does her own housework would be his mother. Not because he rejects the great or noted, but because he honors manhood apart from these incidents of life. Therefore, let us cultivate respect for our common employments, and guard our heart against the tendency to measure men and women chiefly by the business they follow rather than by the way they follow it. This way of estimating mankind is no small part of the ideal he left us.

And that we might see the ideal still

more clearly, we have the record of his common life given in some fulness of detail.

He was subject to his parents. That was a part of the Jewish training, and might have been assumed, but the record specifies the facts. Our young people will do well to heed that feature of the ideal. "Subject unto his parents!" Up to full manhood he practised the command, "Honor thy father and thy mother." It is, therefore, essential for thoroughly Christian young people that they be likewise obedient.

It is not only sorrowful for parents, and bad for children, but it is unchristlike to omit this virtue. With Jesus, it was so prominent that the glory of the later record did not make men forget this, but in the same book which tells of his resurrection, it is written, "He was subject to his parents."

He was an industrious workman, laboring with his hands. The Jewish people taught their sons some useful occupation. They dishonored drones in the hive. Jesus, in line with the best thought of his day, learned a trade. There were houses in Nazareth which he helped to build. There were pieces of plain furniture in some of

those homes which were the products of his handicraft. His hands were hard with manual labor. We shall do well to note that it is a tendency of our time, and especially of the old American stock of our people, to think that the man who lives by his wits is more noble than he who lives by hard work. Our public schools have been under that delusion to a certain extent, and have aimed in their courses at fitting young men to live without soiling their hands, thus casting a shadow upon the dignity of honest skilled labor. They are now turning to the right path. Not until hand labor ceases to be regarded as an unwelcome member of the glorious galaxy of human occupations shall we have seen clearly the whole ideal that Jesus left us.

Again Jesus "got an education." The scribes said in astonishment, "How knoweth this man letters, never having learned?" That was an admission that he knew them. He did not "go away to school." He was not, like Paul, "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel." His people were too poor for that expense. But he was educated in the schools that were available for all the boys in his village. He got his education by the

only way that any boy gets an education. There are three rules for that, and they are infallible. They are: Observe, Think, Practise. No school can do anything for a student who does not do those three things. And no student who does them will fail to be an educated man. He may not be learned, but he will be educated. Jesus heard the Scriptures read and explained in the village synagogue. He also learned to read them himself. We hear much about President Eliot's "five feet of books." Jesus had a library of less than five inches. It contained thirty-nine small books, or manuscripts. They were the books we bind up in one as our Old Testament. These books told the history of his country and people as well as our histories tell us of the United States. They were enriched with splendid biographies; contained most wonderful poetry; brought to the people high moral principles and specific commandments; discussed governments; taught religion. One does not half realize, unless his attention is concentrated upon it, what a rich library those thirty-nine books constituted. But it was not exclusively his. It was open to all the boys of his town. He

gained more from it than others because he read it more observantly, thought about it more carefully, and practised its teachings more faithfully. But we have his library, and the New Testament in addition, so that our material for an education is more abundant than his.

At one of the meetings of the London School Board, the late Professor Huxley spoke on this wise:

I have been seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, was to be kept up, in the present utterly chaotic state of opinion on these matters, without the use of the Bible. Take the Bible as a whole; make the severest deductions which fair criticism can dictate for shortcomings and positive errors; eliminate, as a sensible lay teacher would do if left to himself, all that it is not desirable for children to occupy themselves with, and there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral beauty and grandeur. And then consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple, from John o' Groat's House to Land's End, as Dante and Tasso were once to Italians; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite

beauties of mere literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past, stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized, and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its effort to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work?

From his words afterward, we know that Jesus was observant of nature. He watched the birds and flowers. He saw the farmers at their work, and the fishermen at their nets. He saw the children at their play, and noted their talk. When he went to Jerusalem to the yearly worship, he noted the customs and conduct of priests and Levites. He was a student of life in all its forms.

And then he thought about what he saw. He reasoned: "If God clothes these lilies, will he not clothe men? If this father gives good gifts to his children, will God forget his creatures? If an unjust judge will yield to importunity, will not a just God hear our requests? If human kings will judge their

enemies, will God be always patient? If men ought to pay taxes to their Cæsar, ought not we to pay our debt of honor to our God? If we call God Father, ought we not to be like him?" And so on through the whole gospel record we see that Jesus thought into things, and about things, until the commonplace facts of life became almost vocal to him with truth about God and duty. Life was a book to him, in which the invisible things of God were to be seen continually.

But the same life surrounds us. Suns shine, rains fall, moons rise and set, children play, old men counsel, godly folk live and love here and now. The book of life is open to us all. He set us the example of observing and thinking and practising. It will educate us as it did him. We can come into fellowship of all the God-loving and God-honoring if we try.

He was active in church matters. He went to the temple services from childhood. In his own town he was a regular and helpful attendant in the services in the little synagogue; for we read that he "went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read, as was his cus-

tom." And when he had read, he expounded the chapter with beauty and wisdom, so that they were delighted at the "gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."[4] This element in his life is worthy of note. There is always to young men a period which some call the "smart age." They feel like deserting the family pew in the church, and, perhaps, the family church itself. The customs of worship, long revered, become irksome; they seem to be too narrow. Those who think carefully will not be angry at this; they may be anxious. These young men are simply "individualizing" themselves. It is a process of human nature in its legitimate growth. It is the same innate instinct that makes the chick leave its mother's wing and seek to roost beside her. It is no censure, young men, that we are uttering, but your friends will pray that in this process you may look much at the example Jesus gave you. He had his larger thoughts, but he did not forsake the place of worship to his Father in heaven. He did not assert nor claim independence of God.

Again he was publicly identified with the

[4] Luke 4

cause of religion. When John the Baptist came, he aroused a great religious interest throughout Judea. Jesus did not stand off in a conscious independence of need. He did not say, "Yes, they are having a revival in the church. And *they* need it." But he went to John and said, "I want to be identified with this, for God is in it." When John said, "You do not need this," he replied, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He knew that all public religious advancement needs all religious men. The cause now needs the active support of all who have the cause as a whole at heart. Mere differences in detail should not hinder. Even the imperfections of any single work should not deter us from getting into touch with the best we can find. If all was perfect, we should have no need to do anything. As long as all is not perfect, we must be willing to work with the imperfect.

Thus, with daily faithfulness, Jesus lived his life as a common man. If he had died before he came to his public work, yet he would have left an ideal life record. He might not have been widely known among men. He would not have been so influen-

tial, but he would have been as ideal in his life.

In the factories they make a kind of cloth called "print cloth." It is white, and unsuited for use. It is taken to other places and figures are printed on it. Then it is called "print," or "calico." It required a finishing process to make it into marketable shape. There is another kind of cloth in which the threads are colored before weaving. Thus the figure is woven in, and shows on both sides alike. There is no wrong side. That is "gingham." Jesus' life had no wrong side. It was of the gingham kind. His character needed no future processes to make it good. Its beauty was woven daily in the love of men and God.

The *second* great element in his ideal, growing out of the first, is a world-wideness of sympathy. It is written in that classic verse of John, "God so loved the *world*." Again, it is recorded that Jesus said, "This is the will of God that *whosoever* seeth the Son and believeth on him shall have eternal life." [5] So, also, in the Great Commission, "Go into all the world and preach this gospel to *every creature*." [6] This feature

[5] John 6. [6] Mark 16.

of his ideal has always had to contend with a certain tendency among men to narrowness. The national pride was strong among the Jews, and was very slow to give way to this idea. It has still a representative in the notion of so-called "Anglo-Saxon supremacy." Race prejudice also arrays itself in opposition to the broad sympathy of Christ's ideal. It looks with a disdain on the peculiarities and customs of another people as if they were actual inferiorities. One would suppose that it is a mortal sin to braid the hair like a Chinaman, and a virtue to cut it short like an American. Theology also comes in to hinder, for it insists that certain explanations of things, explanations possible only to a peculiar type of mind, are essential to God's love and favor. These were all active in the early days of the gospel. It was the conflict over these that Paul was engaged in when he was sent to prison, and his zeal in the conflict which was back of his impassioned letter to the Galatians, and which gave birth to the noble and dignified treatise of Ephesians. But, whatever the opposition, there stands in the record the cross of Christ. And as Moses lifted the serpent

up into full view of all the camp of Israel, that all who looked might live, so Jesus is lifted up into human view that "*whosoever* believeth on him shall not perish." No man has anything like an adequate view of the ideal feeling toward humanity who has not seen, and does not feel that the whole human family are his prospective partners in the kingdom of God, and are entitled to his sympathy and help. We need to pray for eyes to see this feature more clearly, and for hearts to be thrilled by it. The Christian world is coming to see it. It gives comfort to remember that nations are seeing their duty to all; that "the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world" is not much longer to be only the dream of a poet, but the accomplishment of statesmen. We see the far-sighted business men of China who will give a foundation for Christian teaching. We find commercial interests from Japan coming to see the wisdom of peace and friendliness. We rejoice in the counsels of The Hague actuated by the same spirit. May the Lord hasten the time when the ideal sympathy of Jesus will be the ideal of the world's people, and when we shall all be not only "fellow-

citizens" of the kingdom, but "members of the household of God."[7]

A *third* great element of Jesus' ideal is faith in God. Some scientist is reported to have said that "faith" is that degree of confidence in an idea which leads a man to trust its operation beyond where he has any assurance that it will be operative. That is not the Christian's definition of "faith." He would say, "Faith is that degree of confidence in an idea which leads him to trust its operation beyond where he can *see that it is operative, because he has an assurance that God is in the idea, and that God can be trusted everywhere.*" Jesus was a man of that disposition of heart. No matter what difficulties arose, he never faltered, because he had no doubt of the ultimate issue. He was often saddened by the hostilities of the Jews; grieved at the slowness of heart of his disciples; but not in despair. In the illustrations he used this was very prominent. He told about the sower, and how some seed fell on stony ground, and other on the wayside, and other was choked with thorns. But, nevertheless, it paid the farmer to sow, for some

[7] Eph. 2.

seed brought forth an hundredfold. No farmer quit the business because the birds stole some of his seed. When he spoke of the tares sown by an enemy, he did not say, "Let us desert the field"; but he said, "Wait until the harvest-time, and then this will get straightened out." When he told of the net which caught good and bad, he did not say, "Oh, let's give up the business!" but he said, "They take out the good and cast the bad away."

In all his talk there was no note of pessimism, but his faith in God was triumphant. He spoke of his death, but it was followed by the promise of his resurrection. He admitted his humiliation, but he said, "The Son of Man will come in his glory." We shall have his ideal fully in mind only when we see that hopefulness is not only a fortunate and much to be appreciated disposition, but a grace to be cultivated; and that a discouraged spirit is not only an uncomfortable guest in the heart, but an evil companion to be rid of, for it dishonors God.

A *fourth* element was his patience with men.

"How oft would I have gathered you."

"Have I been so long time with you and you have not known me, Philip?" "O slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" "But the spirit is willing though the flesh is weak." These are the signs of his "long patience." And he taught his disciples the same in the parable of the tares. "Shall we go now and uproot them all?" they said. "No," said he, "wait until the harvest." He knew the process of making good men was not an overnight one. There is a cultivation of graces which only time and experience can accomplish. There must come the trial of faith to produce the faith. There must be pain of heart to make sympathy genuine. There must be great need in the presence of great weakness to develop prayer. There must be sins forgiven to increase love. The shallow idea of the Christian life which is revealed in the phrase "get saved," and which in many other ways reveals itself in our common speech, had no place in his thought. He saw only the character of the heart, not the record of deeds; it was the fountain he examined; and that is slow in being purified. But he was patient. We

shall do well to be patient likewise. Our best endeavors mature slowly; we see the seeming loss of work, the clinging faults in others and ourselves. God give us patience born of faith which will hold on! "Let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." [8]

Let us keep our minds in familiar acquaintance with the ideal and "be not weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

[8] James 1 : 3.

VII

THE POWER TO WIN

"I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."—Phil. 4 : 13.

"For if these are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."—2 Peter 1 : 8.

I HAVE spoken to you heretofore trying to emphasize the truth that for the improvement of the Christian life we must have a right attitude toward it, and a correct ideal. I have assumed also that in you to whom I speak the heart has been touched by that Spirit which alone can make goodness attractive to us. If, as I hope, some have been moved to a new interest in the tillage of their hearts, I am sure you have met in your efforts a serious sort of difficulty. It has two phases: First, it may have become evident that, to do your full duty, you must make some radical changes in your living, or in your plans. Even among Christians of long standing the search for their faults,

or the clearer view of Jesus as a pattern, not infrequently reveals great deficiencies. These may be in the outward life, as in the business in which a man may be engaged, or the company which he keeps, the books which he reads, the amusements which he seeks; or they may be the more subtle faults of bitter feelings and revengeful spirit. Sometimes it is an intellectual pride which refuses to accept religious truth on evidence which is good in every other department of thinking. Whatever the fault may be, the task of removing it looks too large for them. They individually say: "Knowing myself as I do, I am sure I cannot, in my circumstances, live the Christian life as I ought. I want to do so, but I cannot. I wish I could."

The other phase of this work is that men get weary in well-doing. It is a fact in life with which we must reckon, that in every good day evil is present with us; as, in Job's case, when the children of God came together, "Satan came also." And why should he not come? If there was no good there, he would have no errand. The business of evil is to defeat good. And therefore, where good is, there it may be ex-

pected to compete with it for the hearts of men.

We read that Jesus met a great temptation in the early days of his ministry, that he won a victory, and that Satan left him; but you will recall the added words, "for a season." Temptation was defeated, not annihilated; it returned to him again. So with us, we may win victories, but we are not discharged from the war; we may get where the mastery of it is easier, and where the frequent conflicts are short and successful, but we can never say, "Now I am done with conflict." And, if we could truthfully say it, we are never done with duty. There is always more work for us to do; and, as we grow in our power to do, the responsibility becomes greater. Our Lord did not say of the man who brought ten talents to his master that the master said: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, you shall be retired on a pension," but he said, "You shall be ruler over ten cities." The only man who was retired from service was the man who hid his talent.[1] This is the universal way in the Christian kingdom; success calls for more

[1] Luke 19 : 26.

success. So, when a man has gained the power to do some things well, he is pressed to undertake more.

Because of this unlimited field of work, this never finished task of perfecting holiness, honest, faithful men sometimes get weary. If this is true in your case, it need not give you any sense of fear or mortification. It is not sinful to get weary in any other department of life, why should it be so in this? If we only get weary *in* well-doing, and do not get weary *of* well-doing, it brings no condemnation.

Between the difficulty of our task in "subduing imaginations and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," and the weariness which comes from the work, the best of people often cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" How shall we obtain that power which we must have to carry this load? and where shall we get the endurance to keep up this lifelong strenuosity of endeavor? Pleasant as the work is, we need reenforcement of strength. If any one is to be of real service he must bring to us a good, clear word about the practical sources of power to win."

This is what I most earnestly desire to do this morning. And the first great thought to which I would call your attention is, that the strength we need is always from God, and always through Jesus. There are those who say with sincerity, "We believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth"; but they stop there. They say, "Well, we do not know about Jesus. God we know, but Jesus is as yet a mystery to us. There are many things in this New Testament about which we are in perplexity." To all such we must say that they will have no power to win the victories which the Christian expects to win. We may not say that they have no power at all, but we say that the great power of God comes through Jesus. The Christian life is always a partnership life with him. He began the work. We love him because he first loved us. This is the testimony of all who read well the page of their own heart history. No Christian remembers starting out to find the truth of the Christian experience on what we call, in the common speech, "his own hook." It was always in response to an inside call.

It is written in the book of Hebrews,

"We, brethren, are children of promise." What does that mean? It means this: God promised to come into history and give to Abraham a son by processes extra human, so that whenever they saw Isaac, they would not only think of him as their son, but, in a sense, as God's son; and he would always remind them of God's interest in them, and so bind them to him. He had a sort of triple parentage; the earthly two and the heavenly one—a child of two worlds. So, also, Samuel was a "child of promise." God sent into the ordinary course of things an influence which gave a son to her who had no human hope of one. Thus every one who saw Samuel and knew the meaning of his name—"God's gift"—would be reminded that God was a friend to Israel. This name—"child of promise"—meant that God had come into the case in a manner out of the usual natural manner. He had not put the natural constitution which he had given to mankind out of commission while he made a new race of beings by some other process, and thus practically ignored mankind; but he honored the marriage relation, and motherhood, and fatherhood, and home, and church, by working in

these channels, and imparted to them an unusual power. And now the writer of Hebrews says that Christians are "children of promise"; that is, we are in a sense a new race; we have a new set of experiences, which did not originate with ourselves; we are inextricably mingled with them, but there has been a voice and a power in us which is not of us. Our Christian life, such as it has been, is the sum of our experiences with that power; if we have had a sense of being lost, that power brought it to us; men do not feel that sense because the minister tells them so; they may be irritated by his words, but not humbled; they may have a poor opinion of themselves, but it gives them no concern. It is when the divine Spirit comes into action that men feel lost. Paul said, "When the law came I died."

And if we have had any victories over evil, and made any progress in moral life; if our vision of things spiritual has become clearer and wider; if "Christ seems dearer, and heaven seems nearer," we instinctively say:

> Thus far the Lord has led me on,
> Thus far his power prolonged my days.

The blessed companionship which has made our life journey so far a pleasant one, has been the extra human presence with us of that which the psalmist calls in the Twenty-third Psalm, "My shepherd"; and the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Psalm is our song of deliverance:

> If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; . . Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul. . . Our help is in the name of the Lord.

This experience is the foundation of what we have as our hope for help. It is so trite, and so common, that I almost shrink from saying it. But there is no other thing to say. *We get God's help through faith in Jesus Christ.*

Men, outside of the Jewish nation, studied ethics in great earnestness, but they did not catch a far-off glimpse of the crowning beauties of the kind of life which the prophets pleaded for and the psalmists sung about. The thirty-first chapter of Job outshines the whole Grecian and Roman world. It needed the men who knew Jehovah to give the best elements to ethics. And when Christ came, he added a luster to the Old

Testament ideas which makes them ethically the light of the world.

But you are ready to reply: "Yes; but *how* does Christ help us? *How* does this power come? and how do we feel when it is come? We read books about "power for service"; and the "enduement of power," and the "pentecostal power." What does all this mean"

I do not wish to be controversial, nor to be critical of others any more than is necessary to make my thought plain to you. But I must confess at once that I have no personal experience of some of the things which are written on this subject. They are in a realm into which I never have entered, and do not expect to enter. I do not believe that the Scriptures promise me any such experiences. I do not believe that for the perfection of the Christian life they are either necessary or helpful. For myself I prefer to know God through the faculties he gave rather than to have some exceptional and unhuman source opened to me, by which I can learn of him without my own thinking. It is one of the great joys of life to think out a good conclusion. I prefer to love God because I have seen his goodness,

and felt his love in the same way that I learn to love my fellow-men, but more deeply because he is more worthy than they. I do not expect to love God or Christ in any other way. If my eyes can be opened to see his goodness, I will be thankful.

Then we must notice that strange power which sometimes comes to some people—that which used to be called in the language of the old-fashioned camp-meeting, "the power," in which there was a great nervous excitement, and bodily results which even to-day are not explained. That power, whatever it may have been, is not the kind of power to help us in this "tillage of the heart." It never made men more kind, or truthful, or honest, or industrious. The real "power to win" has no physical sign. It is known only by its results in moral conduct. The mysterious forces of nature which make wheat grow have no sign or measure; no scientist can weigh or measure them; they cannot be touched, tasted, or handled. If a man had not seen the wonder of vegetation by which a barren field becomes a garden of beauty, no scientist would ever have discovered the "life force." It lies there as secret as the

"hidden decrees of God," absolutely unknown to man. But when the seed is put in the ground, at once it sprouts and grows. Then we know that the seed was "alive." So, in this matter of the cultivation of graces in the heart, we do not have any physical manifestation of the power. But when a Christian man, under the sense of duty, takes up a task, the power to do it comes with the taking up. The gift of the power is contemporaneous with the act of duty.

We cannot, therefore, store up power; it will come as needed. You remember the manna was not to be stored up. Whatever was left over after the daily wants were supplied, spoiled. That was a dramatic way to teach the same lesson that the Lord's Prayer teaches: "Give us this day our bread for the day." Living grace, like dying grace, is not sent until it is needed.

Coming now to the power itself, we may say that it begins in a clearing, moral vision.

Jesus said, "If ye continue in the truth, the truth will make you free." James wrote, "Of his own will he begat us with the word of truth." Peter wrote, "He

hath given all things which pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ." All this, and it is verified in experience, tells us that the secret springs of power in us—springs which we did not know about any more than the Israelites knew of the water in the rock—are opened by the better knowledge of the facts of life.

I suppose this is the truth Jesus was trying to impress on people when he healed the blind people. He gave the world to them by opening their eyes as a hint of his method in giving them heaven itself. Anything, then, which gives us better vision of the facts about God's character, and Christ's love, and our own need, is itself a source of power. Just as the shining sunlight quickens in the earth forces of vegetation which were latent, so Christian truth, steadfastly held in mind, will awaken forces for good which will give us new victories.

We find no instance in the Scriptures where God desired to make a man better that he did not begin by giving him a better knowledge of the facts in the case. Do you recall the prophet's words at Dothan? The young man was afraid of the Syrians; his teeth were chattering with

fear. Then the prophet prayed, "O Lord, open the young man's eyes, and make him know that they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And the Lord showed to the young man the mountain full of chariots and horsemen.[2] Then he was brave, and was comforted.

There was once a strong, fierce-hearted Saul, with inflexible purpose, who had set out to stop a religious movement by imprisoning all its adherents. He dragged men and women to prison without mercy because he thought that their religion was a delusion and a curse. But one day, as he was journeying to a distant city to carry out his purpose, he had a vision of Jesus. And a voice spoke to him and gave him one new idea: That idea was that Jesus was not an impostor, but a God-sent one. That vision changed the whole character of his life; he was not disobedient to it; he went on for years getting daily help until, as the Apostle Paul, in old age he laid down his life for the sake of the truth he had learned in his vision.

Doctor Bushnell somewhere tells of a young man who was not of full mind. The

[2] 2 Kings 6 : 17.

boys troubled him, and made him angry continually; but all at once he became docile and self-controlled. He could not be made angry. When questioned about the matter, and asked what had made him so changed, the only reply that he could make was, "I have seen Jesus." That reply, from the half-witted boy, has in it the same truth which Paul learned. The clearer vision of Jesus gives the heart a new power for righteousness. John wrote, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"; that implies that what we need to make us more like him is to see him with clearer vision.

An old man, who had been a very righteous sort of a man, became in his old age a Christian man. He said that he, while trying to live right, had overlooked and left out one thing. When asked what that was, he said, "The Lord Jesus." A new view of Jesus opened for him a new life. It brought new motives, new power, new hopes.

Do you not recall the times when you saw no beauty in Christ? and therefore you did not try to serve him. But when you did get some glimmering of his love, and pa-

tience, and wisdom, did not there rise up in you a flood of gratitude and righteousness that gave you power over things which had been your master? It was clearer vision that gave you increased power. Now, if that is true, then more clear vision would have given you more power.

Again, we get power by association with Christian people. Perhaps the greatest mystery of our life is the power of one person over others. It is so subtle that we cannot follow it wholly; even in diseases it seems to have great power. But in the control over our soul's life it is marvelous. We are sometimes despondent, and a man comes in to see us; he is not there long, but when he goes away we are in a wholly different attitude; his presence banished the blues. We feel wickedly cross at something some day; a godly man visits us; he does not discuss our case at all, but when he goes away we feel ashamed of our previous ugliness of disposition, and resolve to overcome it. The minister is discouraged. He thinks, "No one is being converted, and those who have been are backsliding." His face shows his depression. He begins to have a new interest in the advertisements for small farms.

He studies chicken raising for a week. Then he becomes interested in the commissions that life-insurance agents get. Life is aimless. But some fellow-minister comes in who has had a revival. Oh, he says, it is grand up at our place; children and adults are coming to the Saviour. I wish you could come up and help us a week. When that man goes out our prospective insurance agent gets him to his study, and prepares a sermon for next Sunday which is as cheerful as the song of a child. Personal influence did it. This is what made the writer of Hebrews say, "Exhort one another."

If one goes to a service of worship in the church, joins in the songs, hears the word, and especially greets the people in a brotherly spirit, this subtle influence of association with a company of people, actuated in the main by a courageous and hopeful faith, is certain to give him new strength for good; it will be almost impossible for him to do this and not find his meannesses, if he has any, rebuked, and his good purposes strengthened. There is a real contagion of strength in it, to which few people are immune. The psalmist had felt this when he wrote:

> As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God, . . for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.[3]

And the children of Israel understood it when they sang among their pilgrim songs, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."[4]

I do not think it possible for a man to go to church with fair and open mind even for a month, and not be able to verify the statement that association with people in divine worship is to his religious life like "showers upon the mown meadows"; it quickens all good; rebukes all evil in him; it awakens latent powers which reenforce him in his endeavors to cultivate good in his soul.

Again, we find power in the exercise of what James called a "mature faith" with respect to our own specific faults—and mature does not mean the same as large. A mature man need not weigh two hundred. James said, "faith without works is dead"; and "By works is faith made mature"; that is, the act of faith must go with the feeling of faith, if it is to be complete faith. That

[3] Ps. 42. [4] Ps. 122.

man who had lain upon his bed with palsy might have had a possible faith; but he had no actual faith until he, at the word of Jesus, arose and took up his bed and walked. There was no preliminary feeling of life and power in his limbs; power to walk was contemporaneous with his own attempt to walk; by that combination was his faith made complete.

Suppose a man is stingy, and he wants to overcome it; he may feel that God will help him to do so; but if he does not put his hand into his pocket and give liberally, his faith will be disappointed. Suppose he has a sharp tongue; he must, by his joint effort with God, hold his tongue under provocation. Suppose he is quick-tempered; he must gain power by keeping cool when it is hot all around him. This serious, determined, persistent effort to correct faults is a source of power that never dries up. It is a part of Peter's counsel that we "add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," and so on;[5] our own intelligent activity being interwoven with confidence that God will help.

We likewise find a source of power in

[5] 2 Peter 1 : 5.

quiet companionship with nature. The poet wrote:

> To him who in the love of nature holds
> Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
> A various language; for his gayer hours,
> She has a voice of gladness, and a smile,
> And eloquence of beauty; and she glides
> Into his darker musings with a mild
> And gentle sympathy that steals away
> Their sharpness, ere he is aware.[6]

Nothing is truer than that the soul which gets into quiet, thoughtful observation of nature is calmed and strengthened. It will give you great uplift to "get alone with God." Some of you live in the country, where the book of nature lies wide open; I urge you not to overlook it; let the largeness of your vision, and the boundlessness of your horizon keep you sensible of God's power. But some of you live in cities, where the hand of God seems to be largely hidden; yet it need not be hidden from you.

In the parks where man has put his ideas of arrangement, God still has his own unaided activity. The flowers that fill the air with fragrance tell of his love of beauty for its own sake; the birds remind you that

[6] Bryant, "Thanatopsis."

not one of them falls to the ground without him; the affection they have for their young is his gift to them; and does not God, who taught them love, know how to love his own? Then the outspreading skies that bend over us all alike, tell of his impartial grace; the rains that fall on the just and the unjust alike, assure us that he is not a respecter of persons; that he does not discriminate against any.

It may be you cannot see the parks. Well, can you get a glimpse of the sun, or the stars? Then take time to look steadily at them often; think of their course, of their distance, of their exactness, their invariable faithfulness in coming and going on their mission; and recall that

> His very word of grace is strong
> As that which built the sky;
> The voice that rolls the stars along,
> Proclaims it from on high.

Or repeat in glad unison with the psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech; night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech, no language; their voice is not

heard; but their message has gone out throughout all the earth." [7]

Another source of power is the contemplation of Jesus' character, and love for us. This is what lies back of the Roman Catholic use of the crucifix. They discovered long time ago that the thought of Jesus is both the inspiration to service, and the comfort in trouble. In the days when books were not made, and when reading was an unknown art, the crucifix was almost a whole New Testament. Around it gathered all the stories of Jesus, and the lessons of paintings. It concentrated the thought of people on him. I do not need that; you do not; but we can understand why it has for others great help. And we find power comes silently to us in times of trouble or temptation if we think of Jesus' love and care. Think who he is, what he does for us and in us and with us.

Again, the great all-comprehending source of power is prayer. By this we mean, not simply petition for help, but a trustful childlike laying before God in Jesus' name of all our life plans and troubles. I have spoken about the subtle influence of associ-

[7] Ps. 19.

ation with good men. I think that kind of influence is a typical illustration of the nature of prayer. It is prayer in the embryo. To talk with God face to face as did Abraham—oh, that brings a sense of uplift and courage which nothing else can approach! Philosophy does not take this into account; it makes light of it; it raises questions concerning the immutable laws of the universe and the impossibility of God's taking notice, and all that sort of blind men's denial of things because they never have seen them. But psychology is coming to the defense of the gospel messages. To meditate on God, and to lay our plans before him in prayer, is the most effective psychological device for promoting Christlikeness. It is not God working against, nor without law, but through the most subtle laws of our being. Look at it a moment. If a man was asking God to help him in any undertaking, could he ask for help in one which he knew was wrong? Does not the habit of prayer then purify a man's aims? If a man believes that God is helping him, can he cherish a doubt that he will succeed? Does not the habit of prayer banish fears? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "God is

our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." [8] If a man believes that others with him are asking God for grace to be truly good, does not that fellowship in endeavor, and that common dependence on God create a sense of fellowship, and thus work for the neighborly love which we desire to possess? "He is our peace, who hath made both one and broken down the middle wall of partition." [9] If a man feels that he is weak in moral force, but is permitted to ask God for it, and that God is an interested partner in his holy endeavors, is there any way in which he can come into that partnership except to pray? It seems to me that as the rivers are the assembling of the streams, so prayer gathers up and combines in one all the streams of power which can flow into our hearts; and gives us the aid of God in our work; and his aid is the "power to win."

[8] Ps. 46. [9] Eph. 2.

To review our thought—we get our "power to win" from God through Jesus Christ. But this power does not come to us in a way that dishonors the constitution he gave us; but it works in us, utilizing every avenue by which our lives may be made "fruitful unto every good work." And of these avenues a knowledge of the truth is first; association with those actuated by like aims follows; quiet companionship with nature helps; faith is perfected by actual endeavor; and all are to be permeated by a prayerful habit of mind.

I am not unmindful that these suggestions lack a certain smack of mystery and a kind of supernaturalism which some crave. But we may rest in the assurance of our text: If we do these things, our tillage of the heart will not be barren nor unfruitful.

VIII

THE RESULTS OF OUR TILLAGE

"We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. 3 : 18.

IT is a great fascination in the study of physics to note the changes which may come to substances without destroying their essential natures. It is said that charcoal is pure carbon; and that pure carbon can be made into a brilliant, flashing diamond. Changed from black, lusterless charcoal to flashing jewel! and carbon still.

This piece of hard, cold substance is ice. Warm it, and it is water, which you may drink; warm it more and it will drive the engine which takes you to Chicago or to London; warm it still more and it may become an explosive gas which will shatter its prison and destroy its keeper. Changed from inert ice to almost infinite power!

Here is a pile of sandstone. Pulverize, and heat it, mix with a little lime and

soda, and it becomes glass. Changed from opaque stone to transparent glass!

Here is a mass of ore. Stamp and purify it, and we may have a bar of gold.

Look, now, at the realm of vegetation. Here is this soil of the garden. It is plain democratic dirt. And some moisture has gotten into it—not eau de cologne, but simple rain-water. The combination is the same as that from which girls make mud pies, and which boys track on to the carpet—plain, plebeian mud, unpoetic and unpretty. But plant a little seed in it and wait awhile. That seed has no beauty, not much weight; but it has leased the power of God for the summer. And in the season of it, behold, a flower of delicate pattern, beautiful color which no artist can match, and fragrance which defies the skill of the chemist! Changed from mud to mignonette!

If now we pass from the realm of vegetation to the sphere of animal life, we find equally wondrous changes. Two little boys came to me this summer and said: "Mr. Hobart, we have found something." So I went to see. Up in a tree, overhanging the path, was a little nest about as big as the

half-shell of a large English walnut. In it were some small eggs. Six weeks after those eggs had changed into resplendent-hued, flitting hummingbirds, their wings moving with a rapidity we cannot estimate, and with a power, according to their weight, which man cannot equal by any of his inventions.

Now, consider this babe. What a helpless piece of flesh it is! It does not know the way to its own mouth. It does not know the mother who bore it. But wait awhile, and that same wondrous "thing" may sit as the arbiter in national questions, or rule with wisdom and justice our own great nation. Changed from babe to manhood!

I am sure after this, which is so common that we do not often think of its wonder, we ought not to stumble over the words of the text, "Changed into his image."

And this change is the central thing in the Christian life. It is the final outcome of all our tillage of the heart. John wrote, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when it does appear we shall be like him." [1]

[1] 1 John.

And again it is written, "He will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."[2] Nothing can be more glorious than to be made like Him.

This is the substance of the "hope of the gospel."

In my school work I am often surprised to find how many students come there who have no clear idea of what the "hope" is. They know what the "faith of the gospel" is, but they are ignorant of its "hope." Many of them think that the Christian life is like a great river, and the Christian is a man in his boat going with the current. He does not know what experiences he will meet, nor how long they will last; he is only assured that the river runs to the sea, and he is on the river; so he will get to the sea after a time. But what he will have when he gets there he does not know. That is a correct spirit for faith; but it falls short of what is within his reach in the matter of definite anticipation of clear "hope."

Some good degree of Christlikeness is a definite "hope" to which we may attain here and now. It is a definite haven into

[2] Phil. 3 : 21.

which the river of our life may run before we sail the ocean of eternity.

But I must say a word of personal character here. I cannot speak about this with all the assurance I wish I could. I am not able to say that I know the outcome as well as I desire. My life is not all that it ought to be. But I can say this: The frigidity of my heart has been reached by the love of God. The snows have melted off; the streams are singing their spring songs. I have heard the song of the first bluebird and robin, which tells me that the Christian summer is approaching. I can see the tints of green on the trees and fields. My desires are toward him. Some new affections have been awakened. My choice of companions is for Christians. I want none but Christian books and thoughts. My ambitions are toward Christ. Some of the old sins are dropping off like the clinging leaves of the oaks, which, though they defied the storms of winter, yield to the suns of spring. So much I testify from experience. The rest comes from observation and from the Book.

Consider now what this means when translated into language of everyday life.

It says to the man with a quick temper that he may gain control of it. It has been done in thousands of cases. It tells the man with a selfish spirit that he may come to have that mind in him which was in Christ Jesus. It says to you who think yourselves the least Christlike that you may become true saints. All saints were made out of the same sort of material that you are. You can be a man of real honest religion, not simply on Sundays, but all the year. Some of you have lost faith in men, and perhaps in yourselves. You may be like the Scotchman who, when he read the psalm, "I said in my haste, All men are liars," added, "And if he had lived now he would have said it at his leisure." You are not like Christ in that. He never lost faith in you. It is a wondrous thing to read what he said to his preachers: "Go out and tell all men that if they will believe in me they shall be saved." And "saved" meant made into Christlike men and women. He would stand and look at the crowds which move along our streets, and say, "All these can be made into good men and good women if they will give me a chance at them." O you men and women who are discouraged

about yourselves, behold I bring to you good tidings of great joy! You can be made into good men and women. If you could not be changed into his image, then, to you, the gospel would be a failure, for that is exactly what it is for. If you are not changed into his image it is your fault, not his, for he can do it. The heart can be made clean, the will can be made strong, the sympathy can be made broad, the faith may become unfailing.

Think not that you are an exception. There are no exceptions with God. Jesus reasoned with a logic which is conclusive, when he said: "I came down to do the will of him that sent me. This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth shall have eternal life. Therefore him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." [3] But we are not to put off the victories until some other world. Some of you feel that you are of so small account in this world's affairs that you are not much thought of by him. But he always taught that God sent him, and he himself came, to seek and to save the lost. The more you are lost the more

[3] John 6.

he longs to bring you home. If all this church were saints except you, he would leave them to make you into his image, for he said so.[4]

But I presume that you are thinking, "Oh, the minister is enthusiastic, but we must discount his words some. Why should you discount them? Is it because God is not able to change you? I know you would not deny his power. Is it because he does not want to do it? He came to earth for that very purpose. But you say, "Why has he not done it before this?" And there you touch the kernel of the matter. The reason is that you have not been made to think that it was possible in your case. Like many others, you have come to think it is rather too much to say that you can be Christlike. But he does not think it is too much. He thinks it is too little for you not to be so. The truth is that all along the line of history men have been slow to expect what he is ready to give. In the times of Isaiah there were promises of good things so great that the people could not believe. "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been re-

[4] Luke 15 : 4.

vealed?" said the prophet.[5] The sixtieth chapter of that prophet's writing is given to making them see the greatness of the power of God. So also in the letter of Paul to the Ephesians, after telling of the great purposes of God in Christ he adds: "I pray that the eyes of your hearts may be enlightened, that ye may know the hope of his calling; the glory of his inheritance; and the power of God toward you."[6] Then he gives them a measure of that power as he says, "in that he hath raised up Christ from the dead and set him at his own right hand, far above all authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named." Are you so weak or so wicked that he who can raise the dead cannot give you victory? No! we cannot overstate the hope we have a right to cherish—that Christ will give us power to be Christlike here and now.

I state it strongly because it needs to be impressed upon us all. We yield too easily to the notion that we cannot be much better than we are.

But we must take the whole text into our thought. It says into his "image," not into his "equal." We are miniatures of him

[5] Isa. 51. [6] Eph. 1 : 14.

photographed down to smaller size. We have some of all the graces that beautify him. "Grace for grace." If he is kind, so are we. If he is true and loyal to God, so we will be unflinching in our devotion. Does he love all men; we will not shut out any class of mankind from our sympathies. Did he have hope; we will not deny our hearts an ardent expectancy of things to come.

But again, the text says, "From glory to glory"; that is, progressively. Christlikeness does not come to us all at once. We see an apple tree in the spring, and there is nothing but little hard, green nubs on the limbs, where fruit will be, not fit for animals to eat. A little later no one wants them except boys, and they ought not to have them. Later they hang, ripe and luscious, the delight of those for whom they have grown. So Christlikeness grows on toward completeness. Peter the apostle was without doubt at first a swearing, fighting fisherman. Even when he was a disciple Jesus told him he savored not of God, but of evil. After he was an apostle he swore three times that he did not belong to Jesus' company. A green apple yet! But when

he wrote his First Epistle, he was ripe for the Master's use.

Paul grew in grace and knowledge. At first he thought he would stay in Jerusalem. He was sure that he could turn them all to the Saviour. But God told him to get out of the city and go to the Gentiles. And even then, for a time, he said he "knew Christ after the flesh." That is, his conceptions of the Messiah were of a Jewish sort. The Christ was to be a national king. "But now," he says, "I know him so no more." He was ripening. And when at last he lay in his Roman prison, waiting for his trial, he had become the broad-minded author of the Ephesian letter, and all Jewish narrowness is banished forever. Ripened under the sun of trial and responsibility!

This is our comfort: we can be better next year than we are now. If I should come back here next year all those who have submitted themselves under the mighty hand of God will be richer in experience and riper in character than now.

"Even as by the Spirit of the Lord." That is the working force. Let no man be discouraged. He that begun this work will

carry it on until he has completed it. And each year will see advancement. I urge you to believe that you can, and resolve that you will, be Christlike now.

P. S.—You do not need remain a weak, uncertain Christian. Help is within reach.

DATE DUE

GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.

252.06
H681

Hobart, Alvah Sabin
AUTHOR

Tillage of the heart.
TITLE

54109

252.06
H681 Hobart, Alvah Sabin.
Tillage of the heart.

54109